TWO WILD CHERRIES

HOWARD R. GARIS

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TWO WILD CHERRIES SERIES

By HOWARD R. GARIS

TWO WILD CHERRIES
How Dick and Janet Lost Something

TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE COUNTRY
How Dick and Janet Saved the Mill

TWO WILD CHERRIES IN THE WOODS
How Dick and Janet Caught the Bear

TWO WILD CHERRIES AT THE SEASHORE
How Dick and Janet were Shipwrecked

"Bless my gasoline!" cried the Taxi driver.

—*Page 12*

TWO WILD CHERRIES

OR

HOW DICK AND JANET LOST SOMETHING

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

Author of "Rick and Ruddy," "Rick and Ruddy Afloat," "Rick and Ruddy Out West," "Rick and Ruddy in Camp," etc.

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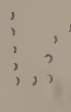

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TWO WILD CHERRIES

CHAPTER I

A WHEELBARROW RIDE

"WHAT do you get the most of for a penny, Aunt Sallie?"

"Get cinnamon beans, Dick! Get cinnamon beans! You get a whole handful for a cent!"

Two children—a boy with dark, waving hair and red cheeks, and a girl whose blue eyes laughed merrily beneath her golden curls—stood in front of the candy counter of a little store. Anxiously they looked at the sweets behind the glass.

"Do you get most cinnamon beans for a penny, Aunt Sallie?" asked the boy.

"Well," replied the little old lady, as she patted back her gray hair and smiled at the children, "you get get quite a few; yes."

"More than you do of licorice drops?" the boy wanted to know.

"I don't like licorice drops!" exclaimed the girl. "Get the red cinnamon beans, Dick—they're the best!"

She stood first on one foot then on the other, fairly dancing about.

"All right, Janet!" decided her brother. "A penny's worth of cinnamon beans, Aunt Sallie, if you please," he ordered.

He passed the penny across the glass show case and received the little bag of candies. Somehow, now that the candies were in a bag, there didn't seem to be so very many of them after all. Dick opened the bag and looked in, rather disappointed. He wished he had taken licorice drops.

"Half of 'em's mine!" cried Janet. "You got to give me half, 'cause mother said you must!"

"All right—I will—wait a minute, can't you?" and Dick was just the least little bit impatient.

"And you got to divide 'em right here in the store—count 'em out on the show case!" insisted Janet. "Then you won't drop any in the dirt—and you always say they're *my* candies that fall in the dirt," went on the little girl.

"Oh—all right!" agreed Dick. "Wait a minute, can't you?"

"Yes, my dears, it would be better to divide them in here," said Mrs. Sarah Patten who kept the candy and toy store. "Aunt Sallie" she was, to every boy and girl in Vernon.

Dick tipped the bag upside down, emptying the red candies out. One of them rolled to the floor.

"There! I s'pose you'll say *that's* mine 'cause it fell!" cried Janet, with scorn in her voice.

"No, I'll take it," chuckled her brother. "It's a big one!"

"Oh!" gasped Janet. And again: "Oh!"

Then she remained quiet for Dick had begun "counting out," making two piles of cinnamon beans, one for himself and one for his sister. This was serious work—too much talking might mix up the count. But at last it was over. Dick added the last bean to his sister's pile and at once Janet set up a cry:

"Oh, you gave me an awful little one—that last! It wasn't half a bean!"

"I gave you that *extra!*" declared Dick. "It was left over and—"

"Oh, did you! Thanks!" and Janet smiled, now.

Picking up her red candies she made a dash for the door.

"Wait a minute!" begged her brother. Some of his candies spilled to the floor in his haste at gathering them up. "Wait a minute! I dropped some!"

"Can't wait!" Janet flung back over her shoulder as she shook her golden curls. "I'm going to play with Lulu Wilson."

"I thought you were going to play cowboy and Indian with me!" shouted Dick as he managed to find the last candy and dashed out after his sister. "I'll let you wear my feather hat and be Indian if you want to! Hi, Janet—wait—a minute— Oh—wait—"

His voice became a cry of distress as he tripped just outside the candy store and fell, scattering his red cinnamon beans all over the sidewalk.

"Oh, Dick!" murmured Janet sorrowfully as she turned in time to see what had happened. She ran back to help her brother pick up his candy.

"My, what wild children!" remarked old Mrs. Batton who had just entered the store to buy a spool of thread, for Aunt Sallie kept "notions" as well as candy and toys. "Two harum-scarum youngsters!" and old Mrs. Batton screwed her face into more wrinkles than she really needed.

"Yes, they are a bit wild," answered Aunt Sallie with a smile. "But they are kind and good. Two wild cherries I call them."

"Ha! That's a good name for them!" decided Mrs. Batton. "They are *Cherry* by name and *wild* by nature—two Wild Cherries! Very good! I never thought of that before!"

"Oh, I've called 'em that in my own mind a long time," said Aunt Sallie. "They come in here nearly every day with a penny or two to spend. They're my best customers—the two Wild Cherries."

"Well, they certainly act wild!" said Mrs. Batton as she turned to leave with her spool of thread. "Look at 'em now—as wild as hawks!"

For Dick and Janet Cherry, having gathered up the scattered candies, were dashing down

the street toward their home, not far from the toy store, on a pleasant street in the quiet little country village of Vernon.

Dick and Janet were the only children of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cherry, and sometimes Mrs. Cherry said she wouldn't know what to do if she had more boys or girls like the two wild ones. But Mr. Cherry, who owned a hardware store in the village, used to laugh and say he liked to see children lively and full of fun.

"Full of fun!" exclaimed his wife. "Why Dick and Janet are so full of fun that it runs out of their ears and eyes! My goodness! I wonder what they'll do next!"

However Dick and Janet never did anything very bad—full of mischief they were, and sometimes they got into trouble, but they never meant to, and always said they never would do it again—but sometimes they did.

"Come on now—we'll play cowboy and Indian!" proposed Dick, when he and his sister reached home after their trip to the candy store.

"You said you'd let me take your feather hat," said Janet.

"Sure I will! I'll get it."

Dick hurried into the house and came out with a gay bunch of feathers inserted in a band of cloth. It could be fastened around the head, the feathers hanging down one's back, as the Indians formerly wore their war bonnets.

"Put it on, Janet," said Dick, tossing the feathers to his sister. "I'll get the wheelbarrow."

"What are you going to do with the wheelbarrow?" asked the little girl, who was two years younger than her brother.

"I'm going to give you a ride," answered Dick.

"Indians don't ride in *wheelbarrows,*" objected Janet. "Who ever heard of an Indian riding in a *wheelbarrow?*"

"Well, of course I know they don't, really," admitted Dick. "But we'll make believe the wheelbarrow is an Indian pony, and you're riding on his back and you must chase me. I'll be a white settler and you must come after me and whoop like an Indian."

"But how can I chase after you if you're pushing me in the wheelbarrow?" objected Janet. "I don't see—"

"Ah, say, can't you make-believe that, too?"

asked Dick, with an impatient upward fling of his hands. "You got to make believe real *hard* if you're going to play Indian. I'll be a white settler and an Indian pony at the same time. All *you* got to be is the Indian."

"Oh—all right," agreed Janet. "Get the wheelbarrow."

Dick started for it, but paused to come back and ask:

"You got any of those red cinnamon candies left?"

"Maybe I got two or three," cautiously admitted Janet, "but I aren't going to give you any—you had your share and—"

"Oh, say I don't want to eat 'em!" declared Dick. "But if you have any red candies just wet 'em and rub the red part on your face."

"What for?" asked Janet in surprise as she reached in her little pocket and brought out two damp, sticky candies. "What do I have to rub 'em on my face for?"

"To make red paint same as like the Indians have," replied Dick. "All Indians are painted when they go on the war path and that's where you're going. Rub the red candy on your face."

Janet did so, streaking her cheeks, chin and forehead with the brilliant red of the cinnamon drops.

"That's fine!" cried Dick. "You look just like a real Indian now."

"I hope it'll wash off," murmured Janet. "If mother sees me—"

"She won't see you," broke in Dick, with a glance toward the house. He and his sister were walking toward the lower end of the yard where the wheelbarrow was kept in a little shed with the other garden tools. "Now you wait here, Jan, and I'll give you a ride."

"All right," agreed the little girl. "Should I put a dab of red on my nose?" she asked. "I got one more candy left."

"Yes, go ahead, put some on your nose," decided Dick.

"Then I'm going to eat the candies after the red is all off," declared Janet. And this she did. She sat there on a box, waiting for her brother to come back with the wheelbarrow—a little girl with blue eyes, tangled golden curls and a face all streaked and spotted by the red cinnamon candy.

"Here I come! Whoopee-whoop! Whoopee-

whoop!" yelled Dick at the top of his voice as he dashed around the corner of the tool house the wheelbarrow rattling and bumping before him as he pushed it along the path.

"What are you hollering for?" demanded Janet.

"That's the way Indians always holler," said Dick.

"Well I thought you said I was to be the Indian. I got red paint on my face and—" Janet looked at her brother.

"Oh, well," he replied, "I was just showing you how to do it. Now you get in the wheelbarrow and yell like I did. Then we'll go down in the meadow and make believe have a tent, and it'll be lots of fun."

Janet took her place and Dick started off on the run, guiding the barrow around the front walk. As he passed the side of the house Mrs. Cherry could be heard calling:

"Children! Children! Where are you? What are you doing?"

"We're going to play Indian, mother!" answered Dick.

"Well, come here a minute, please. I have some news for you!"

"Oh, what you s'pose it is?" gasped Janet.

"We'll find out after a while," said Dick. "We got to play Indian now."

"No! No! Let me out! I want to hear what mother is going to tell!" objected Janet. "Let me out, Dick!"

But Dick, with a whoop, started wheeling the barrow faster. Around the corner of the house he swung and down the front walk. And, as he did so, a little old lady—a dear old lady dressed neatly in black, and with beautiful white hair—started up the walk toward the front door. She had just alighted from one of the depot taxicabs, and was evidently coming on a visit for behind her the taxi driver carried her valise.

With head down Dick pushing the wheelbarrow before him, did not see the old lady. Nor did Janet, for she was sitting facing her brother and she was begging him to stop and let her out.

"Nope! This Indian pony doesn't stop! Whoopee!" yelled the boy.

Mrs. Cherry by this time had opened the front door. She saw the old lady coming up

the walk and she saw the two Wild Cherries headed straight for her.

"Dick! Janet!" cried their mother. "Look out! You'll run into your—"

She did not have time to finish, nor did Dick have a chance to heed the warning. On he dashed, and a moment later the two Wild Cherries, wheelbarrow and all, had run into the dear old lady, knocking her down on the walk.

"Oh! Oh, my dears!" she gasped, as she fell.

"Bless my gasolene!" cried the taxi driver, pop-eyed with wonder.

"Oh, Dick! Look what you did!" sobbed Janet.

And there they were—all in a heap! The little old lady sitting up on the walk, Janet, lying on her back as she was spilled from the wheelbarrow, with her cheeks red-spotted and the Indian feathers in her hair. Dick, tangled in the handles of the "pony," and the taxicab driver looking on, his eyes popping out more and more each second.

"Oh! Oh, my goodness!" cried Mrs. Cherry as she ran down the steps to see who was the most hurt.

CHAPTER II

GRANDMA'S CAMEO PIN

"CHILDREN! Oh, children! Why did you do it?" cried Mrs. Cherry as she helped the little old lady to rise, and dust off her dress.

"We—we—now—we couldn't help it!" gasped Dick, who was out of breath from his fast run with the wheelbarrow. "Is she hurt any—I— Oh—why, it's Grandma!" he exclaimed in delight as he caught sight of the smiling face of the old lady. "It's Grandma Cherry!"

"Of course it is, my dear!" spoke the old lady with a smile and a laugh which seemed to show that she was not much hurt, if at all. She stood up and smoothed down her dress. "Of course I'm Grandma Cherry, but I didn't expect to be greeted like this. It's—well, really it's quite a surprise!" and again she laughed.

"You may well say it's a surprise, ma'am," remarked the taxicab driver who was trying to

lift up Janet from near the overturned wheelbarrow. "Bless my spark plugs!" he exclaimed, "but I'm afraid the little girl's hurt!"

He picked Janet up in his arms and pointed to the streaks of red on her face. Janet had remained very quiet after the collision with the white-haired old lady.

"Oh, the poor little dear! She's cut—she's bleeding!" cried Grandma Cherry. "You must send for the doctor, Helen! Please carry her into the house," she directed the taxi man.

Then Janet began to wiggle, and her voice, which she had lost for a little while, following the crash, came back to her.

"I'm not hurt!" she exclaimed. "I'm all right!"

"But there's blood on your face, my dear!" said Grandma.

"No'm—that's just red cinnamon candy juice," explained Janet. "Dick and I—we were playing Indian and I was the Indian and—"

"We—we—now we didn't mean to run into you, Grandma!" explained Dick. "I didn't see you, and—"

"It's all right, my dear, it's all right!" softly

laughed Grandma Cherry who had come to visit her son, as she often did. "I'm not a bit hurt."

"You're all dust, ma'am," said the taxi man who had set Janet down on the walk. "My, but you're all dust and—"

"That will brush off," murmured the old lady. "Accidents will happen. I'm glad the children aren't harmed. But when I saw that red on Janet's face—"

"I can lick some of it off with my tongue," said the little girl, which she proceeded to do, sticking out her tongue and winding it as far outside and around her mouth as she could make it reach. She did manage to clear off some of the red cinnamon streaks from her chin, but those on her cheeks and forehead and nose still remained, glaring red.

"I can almost get 'em off my nose," said Janet. "Almost!"

"Please don't try," begged her mother, as she saw the tongue stretched out again. "Go in the house and wash your face, Janet."

"Oh, can't we play Indian?" begged Dick. "We were going to have a lot of fun, and the wheelbarrow was the horse and—"

"He was rather a skittish horse, I should say," observed the taxicab man with a smile. "You sure were stepping on the gas, my boy, as you came around that corner. Your brakes didn't hold, I guess."

"There aren't any brakes on a wheelbarrow," said Dick.

"There could be make believe ones," spoke Janet, with a smile at the taxi driver.

"Oh, yes—of course," agreed her brother. "But say—we don't want to play Indian any more, now Grandma is here," he said.

"No, I don't guess so," assented Janet. "Can you stay a long time, Grandma?" she asked.

"Well, as long as you want me to, I guess," answered the old lady, with a smile as she walked up the path with Mrs. Cherry, the taxicab man following and carrying her valise.

"We want you to stay forever!" burst out Dick.

"Oh, yes—forever!" echoed Janet.

"Well, we'll see about it," said Grandma Cherry.

"Put the wheelbarrow back in the tool house, Dick, if you please," his mother told him, for

he was walking along, having left the barrow in the middle of the yard.

"Oh, yes," he exclaimed. "We'll play Indian after dinner," he told his sister. "We'll have a lot of fun then!"

"Um," Janet murmured. "But if I wash the red cinnamon juice off my face I won't look like an Indian."

"Never mind," whispered Dick, as he started back to put away the wheelbarrow. "Maybe Grandma'll give us each a penny and we can buy more candy from Aunt Sallie."

For dear old Grandmother Cherry always brought the two Wild Cherries something when she came to visit them. She loved the children as much as they loved her, and she laughed at the queer things they did.

"It certainly is the best name that could be found for them," the old lady had said more than once—"two Wild Cherries!"

"I do hope, Mother, that you aren't hurt or shaken up by your fall," said Mrs. Cherry when she was sitting quietly in the house with the old lady. Though Grandma was Mr. Cherry's mother, his wife called her by the same name as she did her own mother.

"Bless you, no, I'm all right!" laughed Grandma Cherry. "I was shaken up a bit, that's true, but it will do me good, I'm sure."

"You never know what Dick and Janet are going to do next," went on their mother with a sigh.

"Well, perhaps it's just as well you don't know," laughed Grandma Cherry. "And now tell me all the news."

In the midst of the talk Dick and Janet entered the room, quietly enough, for they were on their good behavior, now that company was present.

"Come in, my dears, and see me," invited Grandma. "I think I may have something for you in my bag, if you will hand it to me."

You may be sure Dick lost no time in handing his grandmother the valise. The old lady opened it. She took out a little doll for Janet, and for Dick a jumping Jack that danced and cut up all sorts of queer capers when his string was pulled.

"Oh, what a lovely doll!" murmured Janet.

"This is a dandy jumping Jack!" cried Dick.

"Thank you, Grandma," added Janet, going over to kiss the old lady.

"Thanks," murmured Dick. He was in rather a hurry to take his new toy out to show his chum Henry Merton.

Grandma Cherry took Janet up on her lap for a moment, and the little girl's eyes rested on a wonderful and beautiful pink and white carved pin, set in a band of gold, amid the filmy lace at the old lady's throat.

"What kind of a breastpin is that, Grandma?" asked Janet.

"It is an old-fashioned pin called a cameo," was the answer. "It is carved from a sea shell, and I have had it ever since I was a little girl. I prize it very much."

"Yes, I always admired your cameo pin, Mother," said Mrs. Cherry.

"I shall give it to Janet when I have no more use for it," said Grandma. "It is, I believe, quite valuable, and I should hate to lose it. It belonged to my mother and she gave it to me. But there, I guess you children want to run out and play—just a moment—I think I have something else for you," and she began fumbling in her pocket as Janet slid to the floor from Grandma's lap.

"There you are—five cents for each of you!"

announced the old lady, passing the coins to the children.

"Oh, Mother! You shouldn't!" objected Mrs. Cherry.

"Tut! Tut, my dear! Children must have some fun in this world," chuckled Grandma Cherry. "Now run along, but don't make yourselves ill on too much candy."

"No'm—we won't!" chorused the two Wild Cherries as they hurried from the room.

"Let's go get more red cinnamon candies and we'll both be Indians," said Dick to his sister when they were out in the yard.

"All right," she agreed. "Then you can put red streaks and spots on your face, too."

"Sure I will!" agreed Dick.

"But I don't want any more wheelbarrow rides," objected Janet. "I don't like to be dumped out."

"I won't dump you out again," promised her brother.

"No, I don't want any more wheelbarrow rides," repeated Janet as she shook her head. "Can't you make a tent and we'll both get in it and be Indians?"

Dick thought it over for a moment and then said:

"I can get a horse blanket from the barn. That'll make a fine tent."

"Oh, yes!" agreed his sister.

They hurried to Aunt Sallie's store to buy more red candies.

"My! What's this? Christmas?" asked the store-keeper as she saw that each of the children had five cents.

"Grandma's come," announced Dick. "But I'm not going to buy all red cinnamon drops," he told his sister. "A penny's worth will be enough to play Indian with."

"I guess so," said Janet. So they spent some time picking out other kinds of candy for the remaining four cents each. And then Janet with her doll and Dick with his new jumping Jack, went back home.

Behind the house was a building that had once been a barn, but which had been turned into a garage when Mr. Cherry sold his horses and bought an automobile. There were still, however, some horse blankets in the barn, and they were used in winter to throw over the

radiator of the auto so the water in it wouldn't freeze.

With one of these blankets Dick and Janet made a tent on the edge of the meadow, near the duck pond, into which flowed a little brook of water. Dick fastened the blanket up on some sticks so he and his sister could crawl under it.

"Now we're like real Indians," he said as they streaked and spotted their faces a brilliant red with the cinnamon candies. "Whoop-ee!"

"Whoop-ee!" yelled Janet.

They had lots of fun playing Indian, but after a while Janet remarked:

"Don't Indians ever eat?"

"Sure they do," said Dick. "Indians get hungry same as anybody else."

"Then let's go up to the house and get something to eat—I'm hungry," said Janet.

"So'm I," added Dick. "I guess it's dinner time, anyhow."

And so it was, for as the two Wild Cherries reached the house, dragging after them the horse blanket they had used for a tent, their mother called them to wash and get ready to come to the table.

The blanket was hung over the rail of the side porch, and Grandma sat out there in a chair, listening to Janet and Dick tell of their play, while the cook served up the meal.

"Grandma, could I just wear your cameo pin for a little while?" begged Janet. "Could I just wear it while I eat my dinner?"

"Yes, I guess so," said the old lady. She unfastened the cameo from the lace at her throat and pinned it on Janet's dress.

"Oh, my dear! Don't let anything happen to Grandma's cameo!" warned Mrs. Cherry as the children sat at table.

"I'll be careful!" promised Janet.

The meal was nearly over when Jane the cook came in to say:

"Excuse me, Mrs. Cherry, but there's a boy begging at the back door. He says he's hungry —shall I give him something to eat?"

"Oh, yes, do!" begged Janet and Dick.

"What sort of a boy is he?" asked Mrs. Cherry. "Perhaps he is looking for work, and Mr. Cherry might need a boy down at the hardware store."

"I think he's a Gipsy boy," answered Jane,

"and they don't generally like to work in stores."

"Oh, a Gipsy!" cried Janet. "I want to see him!"

"Are there Gipsies around here?" asked Grandma Cherry.

"Yes, a few," said Mrs. Cherry. "They live in tents and wagons down near the cranberry bog. The men trade horses and the women pretend to tell fortunes. Of course that's silly. No one can really tell fortunes. I suppose this may be one of the Gipsy boys. Give him something, Jane."

"I want to see him," exclaimed Janet, and, before they could stop her, she ran out on the side porch. From there she watched the dark-skinned and ragged boy depart with a bundle of food Jane gave him. "Come back and finish your dinner, Janet!" called her mother.

"I'd like to go down to the Gipsy camp," spoke Dick. "Was there anybody with him, Janet—I mean any men or women Gipsies?"

"Nope. Just a boy. He was dark, like an Indian," Janet answered.

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Cherry. "I don't want you children to play Indian any

more to-day. Don't put any more red candy stuff on your faces, either. Play something else."

"All right," agreed Janet. "I'm going to play with my doll, anyhow."

"Then I'll take my jumping Jack over and show Henry Merton," said Dick.

"Before you go, my dear, I want you to carry back to the barn the old horse blanket you used," said his mother.

"Yes'm, I will," promised Dick, and he did.

When he came back to the porch to get his jumping Jack there was a scene of excitement.

"What do you think you did with it, Janet, dear?" asked her mother in serious tones.

"Why, I didn't do anything with it," answered the little girl. "I just had it pinned on my dress and—"

"What's the matter?" asked Dick, wondering what had happened.

"Grandma's lovely cameo pin is gone!" answered his mother. "She let Janet wear it during dinner, but now it is gone!"

"I—I now went to take it off to give back to Grandma," said the little girl, and her voice sounded as if she were going to cry. "But it

wasn't on my dress. It must have come unfastened and fell off. Oh dear!"

There were tears in Janet's eyes now.

"If it had dropped around here we ought to find it," said Grandma, and she, too, looked serious. "I saw it on you when you ran out on the side porch to look at the Gipsy boy and—"

"Oh, I know!" suddenly cried Dick. "That Gipsy boy! He took Grandma's cameo pin! I'll chase after him and make him give it back!"

Off started Dick on the run.

CHAPTER III

OFF TO THE GIPSY CAMP

JANET CHERRY, who was always ready to do what her wild brother did, made a dash after him. She, too, would try to catch the Gipsy lad who might have taken Grandma's cameo pin. But the mother of the two Cherries had other ideas.

"Dick, come back here!" she called. "Janet —you, too!"

"But, mother," pleaded Dick, "if I don't run after that boy he'll get away off in the woods with Grandma's pin, and we'll never get it back! Please let me chase him!"

"I can run fast, too!" added Janet. "I'll help Dick get him!"

Mrs. Cherry shook her head.

"No, you can't do that," she said, decidedly. "I don't believe that Gipsy boy had anything to do with the lost pin—do you, mother?" she asked Grandma Cherry.

The old lady, whose face had an anxious look, shook her head.

"I don't see how he could have taken my pin," she answered. "Janet had it on all the while she was at the table. She ran out here on the side porch to look at the Gipsy lad and it was soon after this we noticed that the pin was gone. But did the Gipsy boy come around to the side porch where Janet must have dropped my pin?"

"We'll find out about that," decided Mrs. Cherry. "I'll ask Jane."

"No'm," answered the cook, when she had been called in from the kitchen. "That Gipsy boy didn't come only to the back stoop. I left him there when I went to ask you if I should give him something to eat, and he was there when I got back and handed him some bread and meat. He didn't go to the side porch at all."

"Well, if he didn't take the pin," said Dick, "then it ought to be here—on the porch or somewhere. Do you know where you dropped it, Janet?"

"Course not!" answered his sister. "If I

did, I'd go pick it up. Oh, Grandma, I'm so sorry I lost your lovely pin!" she sobbed.

"Never mind, my dear, you didn't mean to do it," murmured old Mrs. Cherry kindly. "And I dare say we shall find the cameo in some crack or corner. It must have come unfastened from your dress and dropped off. Once before it did that when I was wearing it. I looked for my pin a long time, and finally found it in a corner where it had rolled. I wouldn't want that poor Gipsy boy arrested for something he didn't do."

"Well, I'm sure he took it," said Dick. "He could have sneaked around to the side porch when Jane was in talking to you, Mother."

"But the pin was on Janet then," said Mrs. Cherry.

"Well, anyhow, that Gipsy boy might have sneaked around and picked it up after Janet dropped it and it rolled on the side porch," went on Dick. "Maybe he didn't mean to take it, but he has it, and if I could chase after him I could get it back."

"No, my dear," spoke Grandma gently,

"we'll look around here first. Perhaps we may find my cameo in some nook or corner."

So Dick turned back and he and Janet, the latter with tears in her eyes, searched all over the dining room and side porch for the missing ornament. Janet was not really very good at looking for lost pins just then because she was crying. And all that Grandma or Mrs. Cherry could say did not make the little girl feel any happier. She was sure it was her fault that the pin was lost.

And lost it certainly seemed to be—lost or taken—for it could not be found. Every inch of the side porch was looked over, and Jane even used the broom to sweep it so she could get in all the corners.

"The pin isn't here," said Mrs. Cherry coming in off the porch after a careful search. "It must have dropped in the dining room."

But the cameo pin could not be found there, either, though a most careful hunt was made, every chair being taken out and the table moved. The search lasted until afternoon, and Daddy Cherry, coming home from his hardware store, was quite surprised to see the dining room so upset.

"Why, Mother! I didn't expect you until this evening!" he exclaimed as he kissed the smiling, gray-haired old lady. "I was coming to meet you, but you got ahead of me."

"I had a very good reception, though," she said. "Your two Wild Cherries met me with the wheelbarrow."

"The wheelbarrow!" cried Mr. Cherry. "The wheelbarrow! Why—"

"We bumped into her!" exclaimed Dick. "Janet and I were playing wild Indian and—"

"You should be more careful," Dick's father warned him when he had heard the story. "But what is going on here?" he asked as he saw the disordered dining room. "Are you playing wild Indian here?"

"It's your mother's cameo pin," exclaimed his wife.

Mr. Cherry looked serious. Well he knew how his mother prized that historic keepsake.

"Have you looked everywhere?" asked the father of the two Wild Cherries, when he had heard the story of the lost pin.

"I don't see where else we could look," his wife answered. "Dick thought the Gipsy boy might have taken it, but I hardly think so.

Are the Gipsies camping in the same place, Robert?"

"Yes, down near the cranberry swamp. They may not be there long, though."

"Why not?" asked Dick, always interested in these strange, wandering people.

"Because some of the people living near there think the Gipsies have been taking eggs and chickens and I saw the chief of police just before I came home. He was on his way to the Gipsy camp to look things over and warn the band that they must move on if there is any more trouble."

"Then we'd better go there and get Grandma's pin before that boy goes away," said Dick.

"There's just a chance that he may have taken it," said Mr. Cherry, "but I hardly see how he could. However I'll speak to the chief about it. Did you look on the ground outside, at the edge of the porch, Mother?" he asked.

"No, I don't believe we did," she answered.

"Maybe it's there," her son suggested.

"I'll look!" eagerly offered Janet.

"And I'll look under the porch," proposed Dick. "Maybe it went down through a hole."

But neither under the porch, nor on the ground outside, was the missing cameo pin found, and Janet felt sadder than ever as the search was given up.

"I—I guess it's gone forever," she sighed.

"Never mind, my dear," spoke Grandma Cherry kindly, as she put her arms around the little girl. "It might have been a great deal worse. I'm glad it wasn't my purse with my money in, for then I couldn't give my two Wild Cherries any more pennies."

Mr. and Mrs. Cherry knew the old lady cared more for her cameo pin than for a large sum of money, but they did not tell the children this. Though if Janet and Dick could have seen their grandmother looking into nooks and corners every time she passed through the dining room, or out on the side porch, they might have guessed how much the dear old lady missed her pin.

"Do you really think that Gipsy boy might have taken it, Robert?" asked his wife as Dick and Janet went out to play before supper.

"Well, it's just possible that he did—yes," was the answer. "I'll have the chief of police

inquire out at the Gipsy camp. Poor mother! She certainly will miss that pin! It's too bad! She shouldn't have let Janet wear it."

"I know. But it's too late to think of that now," said Mrs. Cherry.

Out in the yard Dick and Janet swung in the hammock, and idly knocked about the croquet balls, without playing a regular game. Dick seemed to be thinking about something serious.

"What's the matter?" asked Janet, as she saw her brother in this strange and unusual mood.

Dick glanced back toward the house and then looked down the road that led to the cranberry swamp or bog.

"Janet, I'm going down there!" he said, suddenly and with a strange manner.

"Down where?" asked the little girl, wondering what was going to happen.

"To the Gipsy camp!"

"Oh! Oh-o-o-o!" gasped Janet. "To the Gipsy—!" and then she clapped her hand over her mouth lest her outcry might be heard in the house.

"Yes—I am!" decided Dick. "I'm going to that Gipsy camp and make that boy give back Grandma's pin. He has it, I'm sure!"

"Then I'm going with you!" declared Janet. "It was my fault, the pin was lost. I'm going to help get it back.

Dick considered this for a moment.

"All right!" he said at last. "Come on!"

So the two Wild Cherries started off for the Gipsy camp.

CHAPTER IV

JANET RUNS AWAY

"DICK, is it very far to the cranberry swamp?" asked Janet of her brother as they walked along through the woods.

"Oh, no, not very far," he replied.

"And will we sink in when we get there?"

"What do you mean—sink in?"

"I mean will we sink down in the swamp?"

"No—course not!" laughed Dick. "'Tisn't 'zactly a swamp, though it's pretty wet when it rains. If you'd sink in how could they pick the cranberries when they're ripe?"

"Maybe they could wear rubber boots, and we haven't got any rubber boots," said Janet. "That's how, maybe, we could sink in the swamp without any boots on."

"Oh, I guess we won't sink in," said Dick cheerfully. "Anyhow the Gipsies are there and they don't sink in."

"All right," murmured Janet. She thought

everything Dick did, or said, was about right.

The two Wild Cherries had told nothing to their father, mother or grandmother about going to the Gipsy camp to look for the hungry boy who might have taken the cameo pin. Janet and Dick thought if they spoke of their trip they would not have been allowed to go. Very likely they would not. But now they were on their way.

"I've been to the cranberry bog before," remarked Dick, as they trudged along.

"Is it lonesome?" Janet wanted to know.

"Sort of," admitted Dick. "It would be a good place to play wild Indian. Sometimes Henry Merton, Sam Ward, Jim Blake and all of us fellows play in there. Once Jim slipped in and got stuck."

"Stuck in what?" Janet wanted to know.

"Stuck in the mud!" and Dick laughed as he remembered it. "He hollered like anything when he couldn't pull his foot out."

"Oh!" gasped Janet. "Couldn't he ever get his foot out?"

"Of course he did—after a while!" chuckled Dick. "But we had to help him and he was all black mud."

"I—I don't want to get stuck in the black mud," murmured the little girl. "Maybe we hadn't better go, Dick," and she turned back.

"Oh, you won't get stuck now!" laughed her brother. "It was wet and rainy the day we fellows went to the bog. It's dry weather now. Come on, Jan!"

So Janet followed her brother.

To go to the cranberry bog where, in the fall, many bushels of the dark red berries could be gathered, the children had to pass through a clump of woods, and across a meadow. Then they went up a hill, beyond some farms and down into the bog.

It was a pleasant day, late in June, a day when the sunshine lingered longest on the hills and in the valleys. School had closed the week before, and ahead of the two Wild Cherries was the big vacation. They meant to have all the fun they could.

They had felt a little sad at the loss of Grandma Cherry's cameo pin, but their hearts were much lighter now that they were on the hunt for it.

They were almost out of the woods, going through a rather dark place, and the meadow

showed green in front of them when, suddenly, there was a rustling in the bushes near Janet. She gave a jump back on the path and cried:

"What was that?"

"Oh—maybe a fox," answered Dick, calmly.

"A fox!" cried Janet. "Oh, I didn't know there was a fox in the woods or I wouldn't have come!"

"Pooh! A fox won't hurt you!" laughed Dick. "A fox is more scared than you are. He ran away as soon as he heard you!"

"Are you sure?" asked his sister.

"Course I am! Jim Blake and I saw a fox once when we went through these woods. It was like a little reddish-brown dog, 'ceptin' it had a big tail like a dusting brush."

"Did it try to bite you?"

"Nope! It just ran away. We ran after it but we couldn't get near it."

"I'd like to see a fox—running away," remarked Janet. She peered about in the bushes, but there was no further rustling sound, nor did she catch a glimpse of any creature with a dusting brush for a tail. Then she took courage and walked on beside her brother.

The two Wild Cherries walked up the hill in

the pleasant sunshine. Then they walked down the hill, and Dick led the way through another small clump of trees.

Suddenly he came to a stop and motioned back with his hand for Janet to halt and keep quiet.

"What is it? What's the matter?" she asked in a whisper. "Do you see the fox?"

"No, but I can see the Gipsy camp," answered Dick, also in a whisper.

"Where?" breathed Janet, her lips close to her brother's ear.

"Right ahead—through the bushes!"

Janet parted the leaves and saw two or three dirty-brown tents. As the children looked they heard dogs barking. And then they caught the murmur of voices.

"Those are the Gipsies—the fortune-tellers," whispered Dick.

"I can't see any fortune-teller," objected Janet. "Is this all the closer we're going?" she asked in disappointed tones.

"No, I'm going up close," said Dick. "But I wanted to look first. I'm going up and tell that boy he's got to give back Grandma's cameo pin."

It seemed easy, when he said it—just like that. Janet hadn't a doubt but that the Gipsy lad would hand the pin back at once when Dick asked for it, and say he was sorry for having taken it. Then all her sad trouble would end.

"Come on," whispered Dick to his sister, "but don't make any noise! We want to take 'em by s'prise; like when we play Indians you know."

Janet knew about Indian surprises. She had taken part in many of them—make believe, of course.

"If we s'prise 'em, and go right up to 'em before they know we're here," Dick went on in a whisper, "and if we ask 'em quick for the pin, they won't have any chance to hide it."

"Yes," agreed Janet.

Softly the children made their way to the edge of the cranberry bog. As Dick had said, it was quite dry now, though at times there must have been water in places and also swampy patches here and there. But the Gipsies had pitched their tents on raised and dry mounds which were scattered rather plentifully over the bog.

Dick and Janet could make out the tents quite

plainly now. The flaps were fastened back, and inside the canvas houses could be seen tables, chairs and even beds, with red covers on them.

"There's a fortune-teller," whispered Dick, pointing to one tent that stood off by itself, away from the others. In front of it flapped a gaily painted banner. It was a picture of a large hand, with many criss-cross lines on the palm. Above the hand was printed the words MADAME DEBORAH and below the hand was this notice: SHE TELLS THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

"I—I'd be afraid to have my fortune told by her," whispered Janet, as a dark-faced woman, wearing a bright yellow dress, trimmed with red and ornamented with jingling spangles walked out of this tent.

"You don't need to be afraid," whispered back Dick. "Gipsies like to tell your fortune 'cause they get money that way. But it's silly, mother says. She says nobody can tell what's going to happen to you—it's just silly to have fortunes told."

"I guess it is," agreed Janet. "Anyhow I'm not going to. Oh, Dick! look!" she exclaimed

in a louder voice than she had yet used. "What are the wagons for?"

"Don't make so much noise!" cautioned her brother. "Oh, those wagons," he went on, as he saw at what his sister was pointing. "The Gipsies travel in them. They hitch horses to 'em and go all around the country. Gipsies never stay long in one place, daddy said. They're wanderers, whatever that is."

"I guess it's something queer," remarked Janet. "But the wagons are pretty."

They were gay, at all events—red and yellow painted wagons, with pieces of glistening looking glass set in the sides and ends here and there, so that they sparkled in the sun. Tethered near the bright red and yellow wagons were a number of horses, and wandering in and out among the legs of the horses were several rough looking dogs.

"Are those the wagons Gipsies carry off children in?" asked Janet.

"Pooh! Gipsies don't take children away!" declared Dick.

"Oh, they do so—Lulu Wilson told me!" declared Janet.

"Well, maybe they used to, but they don't

any more," said Dick. "I asked daddy and he said they didn't. If the Gipsies took away children the police wouldn't let 'em come to camp in the cranberry bog, and they come here every year."

Janet knew this was so, for as long as she could remember she had heard of the Gipsy camp not far from their house. No great harm had ever been done by the dark-skinned wanderers as far as the children remembered.

For a few moments Dick and Janet remained hidden at the edge of the clump of trees, on the edge of the Gipsy camp. They could see some of the dark-featured men and women moving about, and at one place was a blazing fire, over which hung a steaming kettle.

"That's where they cook their soup," explained Dick. "Now," he went on, "I'm going down there and tell 'em we want Grandma's cameo pin back."

"But I don't see that boy," spoke Janet.

"He's in one of the tents or one of the wagons, I guess," said her brother. "Come on, Jan!"

"I—I'm now—sorter scared," she objected.

"Pooh! There's nothing to be scared of!"

declared Dick. "You wait here a minute and I'll go a little closer to see if it's all right. Then I'll come back and get you."

Janet breathed a sigh of relief. Dick walked forward a little way, and looked over the camp. It seemed peaceful enough, with Gipsy men sprawled in front of the tents, or sitting in the wagons smoking their pipes. Dick saw some boys and girls; and one lad, he felt sure, was the one who had taken the pin.

Dick swung around to go back to his sister, but, just as he caught sight of her, where she was waiting near a sassafras bush, he saw Janet turn and start to run away. At the same time there was a movement in the bushes as if some animal were gliding toward the little girl.

"Hi, Janet! Wait a minute! Where you going?" called Dick, no longer trying to keep silent as he saw her speeding on.

Janet continued to run away. But she turned once, showing her frightened face to her brother, and cried:

"Oh, Dick! It's after me! It's after me! Oh! Oh!"

CHAPTER V

A BARREL OF FUN

DICK CHERRY, at first, did not know what it was all about. He saw his sister running away, and heard her call that something was after her, but what it was he couldn't tell.

He gave up all idea, now, of keeping quiet so that the Gipsies wouldn't know he was near their camp, and, raising his voice to a shout, he cried:

"Janet! Janet! Wait! What is it? What's after you?"

Back came the little girl's voice in answer:

"I don't know what it is, but it's chasing me! Maybe it's the fox! Come and help me, Dick!"

"I'm coming!" shouted the little boy. He gave one look back over his shoulder to see if any of the Gipsies might be pursuing, but all seemed quiet in the camp.

As a matter of fact the Gipsies had often been spied upon from the woods or bushes by

children from the village, and the dark-skinned travelers did not mind it. The children seldom annoyed them, and the campers paid little attention to the girls and boys. Nor did the Gipsy girls and boys play with the village children.

So when the Gipsies heard the shouts of Janet and Dick they gave no heed. They had often heard the village lads and lassies shouting in the woods, or about the cranberry bog, and it meant nothing. As the wanderers were getting their supper ready, perhaps they did not even hear Janet's wild screams nor Dick's calls.

On after his sister sped the Cherry lad. He wanted to help, though he could not imagine a fox chasing Janet. A fox would never do that unless perhaps the little foxes were in danger.

"Maybe it's one of the Gipsy dogs," thought Dick. "But if it was a dog it would bark." So he ran on, calling: "I'm coming, Janet! I'm coming! Don't be scared!"

Janet ran very fast—much more swiftly than Dick had thought his sister could run. Now and then she looked back, and once she pointed to the bushes beside the path. Dick saw the underbrush moving as though a dog, fox or

some animal was keeping along beside Janet.

"What is it? What's chasing you?" demanded Dick as at last he caught up to Janet. "Show me!"

"I—I don't 'zactly know what it is," Janet panted as she leaned against Dick, for she was tired and out of breath. "But it was something that wiggled in the bushes. Oh, maybe it was a snake!"

"Snakes don't chase you!" declared the boy. "They're as scared as a fox. And it isn't a fox, or I'd see him. I don't see, Janet, what it could be, unless maybe—"

Just then there was a violent movement in the bushes near the two children and Janet screamed.

Next Dick caught sight of something large and round, like a big ball, covered with feathers, strutting from the underbrush. At the same time there sounded a loud:

"Gobble-obble-obble! Gobble-obble-obble!"

"Oh!" gasped Janet.

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Dick. Then as he heard the sound again, and had a full view of the round, feathered creature, he added: "It's

a big turkey gobbler—that's all—a big turkey gobbler!"

And so it was. The fowl, with his strong wings dragging on the ground, and the curious red tassel dangling over his beak, seemed to be very angry as he strutted through the bushes.

"Oh, will he bite me?" cried Janet.

"I'll drive him away," offered Dick. And with a stick he caught up he made such a brave showing, shouting and threatening the Thanksgiving fowl, that the gobbler was glad enough to turn tail and strut back into the underbrush.

"Was he a Gipsy turkey?" asked Janet, when her heart had stopped beating so fast.

"No, I don't guess they have any turkeys," answered Dick. "Mr. Baker—he keeps turkeys and chickens, and maybe it was one of his. I guess it got loose and walked around in the woods. Maybe it thought you would take it home, Janet."

"I wouldn't do it!" exclaimed the little girl. "He chased me, that's what he did, and I ran."

"You ran fast, too!" chuckled Dick. "I could hardly catch up to you."

"I was terrible scared!" went on Janet.

"Well, you're all right now," went on Dick. "We can go back and ask the Gipsies to give us grandma's cameo pin."

"Maybe we hadn't better go back to the Gipsy camp, Dick," said Janet, tying her hair ribbon which had caught on a branch.

"Why not?"

" 'Cause they must have heard us hollering and they'll know we're here and you can't sneak up on 'em like you wanted to."

"Yes, that's so," admitted the little boy, "but I'd like to get back that pin for grandma and—"

He paused and seemed to be listening. Janet, too, heard a noise in the bushes behind them.

"Oh, maybe that gobbler's coming back!" she whispered.

"If he is!" exclaimed Dick, catching up a heavier club, "I'll—"

But, a moment later a voice called:

"Well, where have you children been?"

And then out on the path stepped Daddy Cherry.

"Oh!" exclaimed Janet in relief.

"Oh!" murmured Dick in surprise. "How'd you find us?" he went on.

"Easy enough!" laughed his father. "Grandma saw you two starting off around the corner of the house, and I guessed that you'd head for the Gipsy camp. You shouldn't have done that without asking."

"No, sir. I—I won't do it again," promised Dick.

"Did you really go to the camp?" his father wanted to know. "Did you ask about the cameo pin?"

"No, we didn't have a chance," was the answer. "A turkey gobbler chased Janet and—"

"I'm glad of it!" said Mr. Cherry. "I mean I'm glad you didn't say anything to the Gipsies about the cameo. That is for the police to do —not you two children. Besides, the Gipsies may know nothing about it, and it would be wrong to say that they had taken the pin if they hadn't."

"I—I didn't," said Dick. "I was going to, but—"

"Well, it's just as well you didn't," spoke his father. "I caught you just in time. Now you

had better come back home to supper with me. You've done enough for one day. Wild Cherries is a good name for you."

But the children's father smiled, so Janet and Dick knew he could not be angry with them.

"Don't fuss so about my lost pin, my dears," begged Grandma Cherry, when the children reached home and their story had been told. "I should very much like to get it back, of course, and it may be somewhere around the house. But don't search for it any more."

"I do wish I could find it, though," murmured Janet.

"I'm sure that Gipsy boy has it," said Dick. The long and somewhat exciting day came to an end at last. When the two Wild Cherries were safe in bed, their father went down town and spoke to the police about the chance that the missing cameo pin might be in the Gipsy camp.

"I'll go out there myself and look around," promised Chief of Police Gannon.

Dick and Janet were up early next morning, ready for a day of fun. In fact they always got up early during the vacation days, but it

was not so easy to rouse them on days when they had to go to school.

"Come on, Jan!" called Dick, after breakfast.

"Where you going?" she wanted to know. "Going to play Indian again?"

"Nope!"

"Going to the Gipsy camp?"

"Nope!"

"Then what you going to do?"

"Have some fun. Come on, I'll show you."

Dick led the way out to the barn, which was also a garage now. In one part there was a mow of hay, for once in a while Mr. Cherry stabled in the barn an old horse that was used to haul boxes of hardware from the railroad station to the store. Usually the horse was kept in a stable near the store. But sometimes, when the animal was used to plow up a garden place near the Cherry home, it was kept in the old barn. So there was always some hay to feed the horse.

"We'll slide down the hay mow," announced Dick to his sister.

"That'll be fun!" she agreed, and they played at this game for some time.

Then, after Dick had taken a long slide, from the very top of the mow, and had slid half way across the barn floor on some hay that was scattered there, the little boy cried:

"Oh, I know how we can have a barrel of fun!"

"How?" asked Janet.

"In that barrel," and Dick pointed to one standing in a corner of the barn. "I'll lay it down on the barn floor, with the open end toward us," he went on, "and we can slide down the hay mow and slide right into the barrel!"

"Oh, that'll be dandy!" cried Janet.

Dick, with his sister's help, rolled the empty barrel over the barn floor, and laid it on the side, with the opening at the end of the place where he had ended his last slide.

"We can shoot right into the barrel," he said. "I'll try it first."

Down on the smooth, slippery hay slid Dick. And, somewhat to his own surprise, he shot, feet first, into the barrel. He had made sure there were no sharp nails sticking out to tear his clothes.

"Oh, you went right in!" cried Janet in delight.

"Sure I did!" laughed Dick. "I told you it would be a barrel of fun!"

"Now it's my turn!" the little girl said.

"All right," agreed Dick.

Janet climbed up to the top of the hay mow. She sat down and hitched herself along until she began to slide swiftly down the sloping part, which was like a hill.

Faster and faster she slid, until she reached the barn floor, over which, to make it smooth and slippery, Dick had scattered loose hay. Straight in front of Janet was the open barrel, and into this she slid, feet first.

"Good! Good!" cried Dick. "Isn't that a barrel of fun?"

But a surprising thing happened. Once inside the barrel, Janet kept on sliding, or, rather, rolling. Over and over rolled the barrel, with the little girl inside. Right out of the open barn door it rolled, and then it began to go over and over, down a hill just outside the barn.

Rolling along went the barrel with Janet inside it.

"Stop! Stop!" cried Dick as if that would do any good.

"Oh, get me out! Get me out!" begged Janet inside the rolling barrel.

But on and on she went down the hill, rolling faster and faster—bumping along.

CHAPTER VI

A WOODLAND PICNIC

DICK CHERRY was very much frightened at what had happened to his sister. He was older than Janet and if she were hurt now his mother would be sure to say it was his fault. And it would be, Dick thought, for he had brought Janet out to the barn to slide into the barrel.

Out ran Dick as fast as he could go, hoping he might catch and stop the barrel before it rolled all the way down the hill. But he soon saw that he could never do this, for the barrel, with Janet inside, was rolling much faster than he could run. Then Dick began to call:

"Oh, Janet! Janet! Get out of the barrel! Roll out!"

Even if Janet could have heard this she could not have done as Dick told her. In the first place she was stuck rather tightly inside the barrel, which was partly filled with hay from the barn floor.

In the second place Janet couldn't hear what Dick shouted at her, for the barrel made such a rumbling sound in her ears that this sound was louder than everything else. Then, too, it would have been dangerous for Janet to have tried to scramble out of the moving cask. So all she could do was to remain inside. And she began to feel dizzy from turning over and over so often.

"Oh, dear!" thought poor Janet, who had stopped screaming for help. "This isn't any barrel of fun at all!"

But though Dick saw he could not catch up to the barrel, he did not stop running. Down the hill he raced after it. Then he saw Jerry, the hired man who made himself useful about Mr. Cherry's place.

"Jerry! Jerry!" shouted Dick to the man who had a rake. "Stop the barrel!"

"Why should I stop the barrel?" Jerry wanted to know. "Let it roll for it isn't doing any harm. Let it roll!"

"But Janet—she—she's inside the barrel!" gasped Dick.

"Whew! Oh, Great Peter!" cried Jerry. "Janet in that barrel? Well, you sure are

rightly called two Wild Cherries! What in the world—"

But Jerry decided he had no time to ask questions. Those could come later. The barrel was coming toward him, but twisting off to one side.

"I'll reach it with the rake!" exclaimed the hired man.

He thrust out the long-handled garden tool, hoping he might catch the sharp teeth on one of the barrel hoops. But Jerry missed it by a few inches, and the barrel rolled on.

However it was now at the bottom of the hill leading down from the barn, and was not rolling so fast. Seeing this, the hired man started after it, followed by Dick.

"We got to get Janet out! We got to get Janet out!" gasped Dick.

But Janet got herself out of the barrel, or, rather, she was helped out in a strange way. The barrel was not rolling so fast as at first, now that it was on the level and off the hill. But it was still moving along, faster than Jerry or Dick could run.

Suddenly the wooden cask struck a fence post. There was a crashing, booming sound,

and, a moment later the barrel fell apart, the staves breaking loose from the hoops. And then, in the midst of the pieces of wood, Janet sat up, wisps of hay clinging to her so that she looked like some Mermaid coming up from the bottom of the sea covered with weeds.

"Oh! Oh, Janet!" exclaimed Dick as he ran up to her, and helped her to get out of the tangle of hoops and staves. "Are you hurt?"

"It's a wonder if she isn't!" murmured Jerry. "I never saw such tricks in all my life—never; Wild cherries—whew! Great Peter!"

Janet looked about her. She was still a bit dizzy from the queer ride, and there was a scratch on one hand. But she gave herself a little shake, to rid herself of the hay, as a dog shakes himself when he comes from the water. Then Janet said:

"I don't guess so! I don't guess I'm hurt any!"

"That's good," and Dick breathed a sigh of relief.

"But I'm not going to do it again!" Janet was quick to say.

"I should hope not!" chuckled Jerry. "What did you do it for, anyhow?"

"It was an—now an—accident!" explained Dick.

"Well, it's lucky it was no worse," went on the hired man. "It was a narrow escape."

"It was an old barrel, anyhow," went on Dick. "Dad won't care 'cause it's busted."

"Oh, it wasn't the barrel I was thinking of—it was your sister," Jerry said.

"I'll help you pick up the pieces," offered Dick. "Maybe you can put the barrel together again, Jerry."

"No, I don't believe I'd better. Next time you both might get in it and roll down hill. That barrel will make good fire wood. But here comes your mother and I guess she thinks something happened."

Mrs. Cherry, having heard unusual sounds out near the barn, had begun to fear the children were up to some mischief, so she came out to see about it.

"Are either of you hurt?" she asked, when she saw the broken barrel.

"No'm," answered Dick.

"But I had a—now a narrow fire escape—

Jerry said so," remarked Janet, somewhat proudly.

"I didn't say *fire* escape," chuckled the hired man. "I said it was a narrow escape. She rolled out of the barn and down the hill in a barrel of hay, Mrs. Cherry," he explained.

"Oh, children!" cried their mother. "Why do you do such things to make me worry?"

"We didn't mean to worry you, Mother," said Dick. "And, anyhow, it was an accident," and he told of the slide and how Janet had gone into the barrel so hard that she caused it to roll out of the barn.

"Well, don't do it again," warned Mrs. Cherry. "Never do it again!"

"No'm, we won't," promised Dick.

The Wild Cherries left Jerry picking up pieces of the barrel, and walked back toward the house with their mother.

But the day was still young. There was plenty that might happen before the sun went down. And when the excitement of the barrel-rolling was over the two children began looking about for something else to do.

"I know what would be lots of fun," suggested Janet, when she had put one of her dolls

to sleep on the side porch, and while Dick was playing with his jumping Jack.

"What?" asked her brother.

"Let's have a picnic," went on his sister.

"Where?"

"Over in the woods. We can take something to eat in a basket and have lunch under the trees. Mother'll let us—I guess."

Janet said the last as if a bit in doubt. Perhaps their mother would think they had done enough for one day, and make them stay home.

"We'll ask her," suggested Dick.

The two children often went to the near-by woods for little picnic parties, sometimes taking their chums with them. The woods were a safe place for them to play, Mrs. Cherry knew. So now, when they asked if they might go there and take a basket of lunch with them, their mother said they might.

"I'll put up the lunch!" offered Janet.

"I'll eat it!" proposed Dick with a laugh.

"You had better let Jane help you pack the basket," suggested Grandma Cherry with a smile.

And after Janet had cut one slice of bread so thick that not even Dick could have bitten

through it, and when she cut the next slice so thin that it fell apart, the little girl sighed, handed the knife to Jane and said:

"You do it, please."

Pretty soon, carrying their basket of lunch, the children set off for the woods on their picnic. It was getting along toward noon, and they would not come home to dinner, they decided, for they had taken plenty with them.

"But be sure to come back before dark," their mother warned them.

"Oh, we will," they promised.

But they did not know what was to happen to them in the woods.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISSING BASKET

AROUND the duck pond, across the sparkling, singing brook, over a green meadow and into the cool, shadowy woods walked the two Wild Cherries. They were not so very wild now, for they had been through enough excitement with the rolling barrel, so that, for a time, they were somewhat quiet.

"It's nice in here; isn't it, Dick?" asked Janet as she told him to set down the lunch basket, so she could "change hands," as her left one was tired from grasping the handle.

"Yes, we can have a lot of fun here," he said. "We'll play we're pirates off a ship and we came here to hide the gold."

"All right!" agreed Janet, always ready for one of these pretend games. "But maybe we oughtn't to have such a good time, Dick."

"Why shouldn't we have a good time?" he asked in surprise as they walked on again.

"I mean we didn't ought to be so glad and happy like."

"Why not?" and Dick was plainly puzzled.

"'Cause I lost Grandma's cameo pin and she feels sad about it and maybe I ought to feel sad, too, but I don't—I like it here," and Janet looked about her with the beautiful woods on every side.

"Well, it's too bad about Grandma's pin," agreed the boy, "but you couldn't help it, and maybe we can find it."

"Where?" asked Janet, with a gleam of hope in her eyes.

"It's in that Gipsy camp—that's where Grandma's cameo pin is!" declared Dick with a serious shake of his head. "If they'd let me go after that Gipsy boy I'd get that pin back, sure!"

"Oh, could you?" and Janet gave a little wiggle of satisfaction in feeling how brave and strong Dick could be if they would only let him.

"Course I could!" he declared. "I'd make him give back that pin! He's got it—I know he has. Maybe he didn't really mean to steal

it, but he picked it up and maybe he'd give it back if I asked him."

"S'posin' he wouldn't?" asked Janet, anxious to know what might happen.

"Then I'd—I'd *fight* him!" Dick looked very brave and bold.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Janet. "Would you—*really?*"

"Sure I would!" and Dick doubled up the hand that was not clasped around the basket handle.

"Not now—would you?" his sister wanted to know.

"No—not now," Dick agreed. "We're going to have a picnic now. And, anyway, I promised daddy I wouldn't go to the Gipsy camp to look for Grandma's pin unless he was with me."

"Oh—all right." Janet breathed easier now. She was a little afraid of the Gipsies, though daddy and mother had said they were harmless folk.

The children walked on farther into the woods where the sunshine was slanting like bars of yellow gold through the green leaves.

"Where we going to eat?" asked Janet, after a while.

"Over by that big stump near the spring," decided Dick. It was a favorite picnic spot for him, his sister and their boy and girl chums. The flat stump served for a table, and the bubbling spring, near by, gave them plenty of clear, cold water to drink.

Dick and Janet made their way to this little glade—a clearing in the midst of big trees—and the basket was set on the stump-table. Then Dick gave a whoop and turned three somersaults, one after the other in the soft, dried leaves on the ground.

"What makes you do that?" asked Janet with a laugh.

"Oh, I just feel so good!" cried Dick, and he gave another whoop.

"Are you playing Indian?" his sister wanted to know.

"No, we're going to play pirate," Dick answered. "I guess pirates don't whoop like Indians, though."

"What do they do?" Janet asked.

Dick thought for a moment, trying to re-

member some sea stories his mother had read to him.

"I guess they say 'shiver my timbers,' or 'belay the main mast,' or something like that!" answered Dick with a laugh.

"Lady pirates don't have to say those things; do they?" asked Janet.

"Lady pirates!" cried Dick. "Who ever heard of a lady pirate?"

"Well, aren't I one?" and Janet looked rather disappointed.

"Oh," and Dick smiled. "That's so, you're going to pretend to be a pirate, too. But you'll have to make believe be a man pirate—there aren't any lady ones, I guess."

"All right," agreed the little girl.

Dick gave another whoop and turned three more somersaults.

"I feel so good!" he explained to Janet's wondering look, though she, herself, was feeling happy for she was dancing about the stump on which set the basket of lunch.

"Dick," she said, getting more serious, "do you s'pose it's all right—being so glad and happy like, when I lost Grandma's cameo?"

"Oh—sure it is!" he declared. "You couldn't help it. And maybe we'll get it back. Come on now, we'll look for a pirate cave and after a while we'll eat."

Off through the woods ran the children, laughing and shouting in delight.

"Do you think you can find a pirate cave?" asked Janet.

"Yes," her brother replied. "Last week Sam Ward and Jim Blake and I came to these woods and we found a little cave in the side of the hill. Course it isn't very big, but we could pretend some little pirates lived there."

"It'll be lots of fun," agreed Janet.

After some search, Dick found the cave he was looking for. It was just a hole under a place where a big tree grew on the side of the hill. Some animal—perhaps a fox—had started to dig under the tree roots, and the rain, in time, had washed out quite an opening.

"Oh, are you going in there?" asked Janet, as she looked into the dark hole.

"Sure!" answered Dick. "This is the pirate cave and we'll make believe dig for gold here. Come on in!"

He squeezed his way beneath the tangled tree

roots, and was almost out of sight in the "cave," when suddenly Janet, who waited outside, heard her brother cry:

"Oh, I'm caught! Something has me by the foot. Oh, Janet! I'm caught fast!"

"Maybe it's a pirate!" exclaimed Janet. And then, as she happened to think there were no such men as pirates in those woods she added: "Maybe it's one of the Gipsies!"

Dick was twisting and turning, trying to get back and up out of the hole. But something seemed to be holding him fast by one foot down in the bottom of the little cave.

"Oh, Dick! What shall I do?" screamed Janet. "Shall I run back and get Jerry or mother?"

"No—don't go away!" gasped her brother. "I guess—maybe—"

Janet could see him pulling with all his might to get his foot loose, and finally he succeeded. Up out of the cave he scrambled.

"Whew!" he cried. "I was scared!"

"What was it?" asked Janet. "Did a bear have you by the leg?"

"No," answered Dick. "It wasn't a bear."

"Was it a fox?"

"Nothing like that," laughed the boy. "My foot was just caught under a twisted root down in the hole. I didn't know what it was until I put my hand down and felt the tree root. But I pulled loose from it all right."

"I'm glad you did," said Janet.

"Next time I'll go down easy and then I won't get caught," said Dick.

"Oh, are you going in that hole again?" his sister asked.

"Sure I'm going in the pirate cave!" declared Dick. "How we going to play if I don't?"

"Well, I'm not going to play if you go in there!" declared Janet. "Maybe you'll be caught again, and maybe I'll get caught, and we can't ever, ever get out and—and—"

"We can't get caught any more," insisted Dick, "'cause I broke that root off when I pulled my foot out. Come on, let's go in and play pirate!"

"No!" and Janet shook her head. "Let's look for a bigger cave, where there aren't any tree roots."

"Oh, all right," agreed Dick, after thinking it over for a few seconds.

"Or, if you don't want to do that, we can go

eat," suggested his sister. "I guess it's 'most time to eat. I'm hungry, anyhow."

"So'm I," assented Dick. "We can eat and then look for another pirate cave."

Back toward the little glade where they had left their lunch basket went the two Wild Cherries. They were soon over their little fright caused by Dick being caught in the hole, and were laughing gaily as they drew near the big, flat stump.

But, as they reached it, their laughter suddenly ended and they looked at one another with wondering eyes. For there was no basket of lunch on the stump. It was gone—not even so much as a crumb remained!

"Oh—Oh, Dick!" gasped Janet. "Look—it's gone!"

"Yes—yes, I guess it is," admitted her brother. "Our lunch is gone!"

CHAPTER VIII

AN INDIAN TRAIL

For a few moments, neither Dick nor Janet knew what to do. It was all so strange. They had come to the woods and left their basket of lunch on the flat stump-table. Then Dick had gotten his foot caught in the tree stump, and they had come back to see the woodland table vacant—the basket gone. And they felt sure no one else was in this part of the forest except themselves. If any of their boy or girl chums had come to the glade their voices would have been heard.

"Well, it's gone," said Dick again, having walked around the stump several times, to make sure that the basket had not fallen off.

"Maybe this isn't the right stump, Dick," suggested Janet.

"What do you mean—not the right stump?"

"I mean maybe we left the basket somewhere else. There are a lot of stumps like this in the woods."

"Yes," agreed Dick, looking about him, "but this is the stump all right. I've been here lots of times before and I know it. Anyhow, look at this old cracker box. Don't you remember seeing it when we first got here?"

"Yes," admitted Janet, "I remember it—you kicked it."

"Sure I did," said Dick. For there had been an empty carton, that had once held crackers, lying at the foot of the stump when the two Wild Cherries first reached it, and Dick, as any boy would do, had kicked at the box, knocking it a little way down the path. The box was still where he had sent it flying, and this made it certain that the children were at the right stump.

"But where is the basket?" asked Janet. "Oh, maybe a bear came and got it," she went on. "Bears get very hungry, Dick." She looked around and glanced over her shoulder as if, any moment, a bear might come stalking out of the bushes.

"There aren't any bears here," declared Dick. "I've been in these woods lots of times, and there aren't any bears."

"I'm glad of it," sighed Janet. "But some-

thing took our lunch. It couldn't go away by itself; could it, Dick?"

"Course not."

"And birds couldn't carry the basket and all," went on Janet. "If the cover was off birds could pick off pieces of the bread and cake and cookies, but they couldn't take the whole basket."

"No," admitted Dick, "they couldn't."

"Unless maybe it was an eagle," Janet proceeded. "Are there any eagles in these woods, Dick?" She looked up at the sky as if she might see one of the big birds.

"No, I never saw any eagles," the little boy replied. "But Henry Merton and I saw a hawk, once. It was after chickens."

"Oh, then it was a hawk that took our basket!" cried Janet. "'Cause there's some chicken sandwiches in our lunch. Jane put 'em in."

"Hawks don't want chicken *sandwiches,*" declared Dick. "They only take *live* chickens."

"But something took our nice lunch!" and Janet seemed ready to cry. "I'm hungry, too," she added with a sigh.

"Yes, somebody took it," assented Dick, "and

I think I know who it was." He had been walking slowly around the stump, his eyes bent on the ground in a manner he had once seen in a picture which was called "an Indian on a trail."

"Who was it?" asked Janet.

"The Gipsies!" cried Dick. "Look!"

He held it up so Janet could see a round, glittering piece of metal. At first Janet thought it was a gold dollar, but when she looked more closely at it as Dick held it out on the palm of his hand, she saw that it was one of the spangles, or jingling brass coins, that the Gipsy women wore on their gay red and yellow dresses.

"Oh, the Gipsies have been here; haven't they, Dick?" asked Janet.

"They sure have," he said. "And I'm going to do like an Indian would do and trail them 'till I get that basket back!"

"Do you think they took it to their camp?" asked Janet.

"I guess they did," her brother said. "Come on, we'll go get it."

"But daddy told us not to go to the Gipsy camp again," Janet objected.

Dick thought this over for a moment or two, and then, giving his head a shake, as he did when he came up after having ducked under water when swimming, he said:

"Daddy told us not to go to the Gipsy camp to get back Grandma's cameo pin. Well, we aren't going after *that*. We're going to get back our basket of lunch. That's all right; isn't it?"

"I guess maybe yes," said Janet. Certainly it seemed right. And she very much wanted some of that good lunch for she was getting more and more hungry every minute.

"Then come on!" invited her brother. "We'll be Indians and we'll trail that lunch basket to the Gipsy camp in the cranberry bog."

Janet was no longer afraid of going into the cranberry bog, though she was timid of the Gipsies. She had learned that though it was called a cranberry bog, or swamp, it wasn't really that. At times the water was deep over the low cranberry bushes—bushes almost as low as strawberry vines. But this was only when there was danger of a frost, and the bog, or swamp was purposely flooded so the bushes would not freeze. Sometimes. too, the bog was

flooded to kill off the bugs and worms that, otherwise, would spoil the crop.

A cranberry bog has little ditches running through it, and these ditches connect with a pond or stream of water. But there are gates, or dams to keep the water out of the cranberry bog when it isn't needed there.

It is in the spring that the cranberry bogs or swamps are flooded. In the fall they dry out so the berries can be picked ready for Thanksgiving. Just now, Janet knew, the cranberry bog, near where the Gipsies were camped, was dry enough to be walked across in low shoes. However there were some low, swampy spots in the bog even in quite dry weather.

"What will you do when you get to the Gipsies?" asked Janet of Dick, as they walked along together through the woods.

"I'll tell 'em I want our lunch basket back," he answered.

"You won't say anything about Grandma's cameo pin; will you?"

"Nope," said Dick.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janet.

"What's the matter?" her brother wanted to know.

"I thought maybe if you saw the pin around anywhere you could pick it up," said Janet.

"Oh, I could do *that*—sure!" declared Dick. "It's only that we mustn't go to the Gipsy camp on purpose for the pin. If we go about the lunch basket that's all right."

Well, of course that wasn't exactly right. Mr. Cherry, in telling Dick and Janet to keep away from the Gipsies, and not to ask about the pin, had meant that they were not to go there on *any account*. But Dick thought it all had to do with the lost pin, and he imagined it was proper to go and ask about the basket.

"I hope they don't eat up all the nice lunch and the chicken sandwiches," sighed Janet as she jumped over a little puddle of water after Dick.

"I hope not," he agreed. "Come on—what you stopping for?" he called as he looked back and saw that Janet was not with him.

"I just want to pick this red flower," she said.

Dick watched her breaking the stem of a scarlet blossom, and, a moment later, his sister gave a cry of pain.

"What's the matter?" shouted Dick, running back toward her. "Did a snake bite you?"

"No! No!" sobbed Janet, clasping the wrist of her left hand in her right fingers. "But a bee stung me, Dick! Oh, it hurts!"

"Let's see!" demanded Dick standing close to his sister.

She unclasped her fingers and showed him a little round, white spot on her wrist. Around the spot her wrist was quite red and was beginning to swell, so quickly did the poison from the bee's sting act.

"Oh, it hurts!" and Janet was now crying. "It hurts terrible!"

"Here! Let me see if the stinger's in it yet," exclaimed Dick, taking hold of her hand. "If the stinger's in I got to get it out. Jim Blake told me, and his father keeps bees, so he knows. Wait 'till I look."

Dick had hard work to keep Janet from pulling her stung wrist away from him, but he managed to get a good look at it and decided the bee had not left its stinger in.

Dick's idea was right—if a bee, wasp or hornet leaves, in the wound he makes, his stinger, the wound will be much more sore and painful, and it will not heal as quickly, as it will if the stinger is taken out.

The stinger of honey bees, and other such insects, is shaped like a tiny arrow, with barbs on each side of the point, like the barb on one side of a fish hook. It is these barbs that hold the stinger in the skin, that is if the wound is deep enough.

But nearly always a bee will give a sudden jab with the stinger, at the same time putting in some acid poison, just as does a mosquito. Then the bee flies away. If a bee leaves the stinger in a wound, that bee dies, for they have but one stinger.

"Oh, Dick! It hurts terrible!" sobbed Janet.

"I know it," agreed her brother. "I was stung once. But I'll put some mud on for you, Janet. That will make it feel better."

"How can mud stop a bee sting?" asked the little girl.

"I don't know," Dick answered, "but it does. Ammonia out of a bottle is better, but we haven't got any of that, so we can take mud. Come on—I'll put some on your wrist."

Dick led Janet back to the little stream they had crossed a moment before, and picking up some mud from the bank, he bound it on her wrist with some wet moss.

"Oh, it feels better already," Janet said, smiling through her tears. "Thanks, Dick."

"That's all right," he said. "Now do you want to go on the Indian trail after our lunch?"

"Yes," she said. "I'm hungry. That was a mean bee to sting me, but it doesn't hurt so much now. He bit me just when I picked the flower, and then I dropped the blossom."

"He must have been on it and you must have squeezed him," said Dick. "Wait now, and I'll tie my handkerchief around your wrist and that will keep the mud on," offered Dick, and this he did.

"My arm will be muddy, but I don't care—it's better than a bee sting," said Janet, wiping away her tears.

"Does it hurt much now?" asked her brother.

"Not much," she said, "but it feels funny. I guess it's swelling up."

"Yes, bee stings always swell, even if you get the stinger out. But come on—let's go and find our lunch basket."

Janet followed Dick, wondering why it was that the mud made a bee sting less painful. Later on she found out. It is because when a bee stings he puts a strong acid in one's blood.

Ammonia is just the opposite to an acid, being what is called an alkali. Most mud is also an alkali and this neutralizes or takes the poison out of the acid from the sting.

On through the woods went the children, and Janet was careful to pick no more flowers. The sun was still shining brightly, but noon had passed. It was the dinner hour of Dick and Janet some time since, and they wished, very much, for the good things in their lunch basket.

"Are we getting near the Gipsy camp, Dick?" asked Janet.

"Yes, pretty soon, now," he answered.

He led the way along a narrow path. Suddenly Janet, who was close behind him, clutched her brother by the coat, pulling it.

"Look!" she whispered. "Look!"

She pointed to something in a tree.

CHAPTER IX

THE FORTUNE TELLER

Dick looked toward where Janet directed him, her fingers wiggling excitedly as she stretched out her arm to point.

"Do you mean that hornets' nest?" asked Dick, for he saw one of them in the tree. "I'm not going to knock that down, Janet, if that's what you mean," he said. "I should think you'd been stung enough, anyhow."

"No, I don't mean the hornets' nest," exclaimed Janet. "But see—our basket of lunch! There it is, hanging on a branch!"

Dick looked for a moment, gazing a little to one side of where he had first fixed his eyes on the hornets' nest. Then he cried:

"Oh, so it is! How did it ever get there?"

"I don't know," Janet answered. "But it's like a Christmas tree; isn't it, with a present on; isn't it, Dick?"

"Yes, and it's a fine present, too," exclaimed the boy. "I'm good and hungry now. I hope

they left the lunch in and didn't just hang up the empty basket."

"Who you s'pose did it?" asked Janet as the two children walked slowly toward the tree, on a lower limb of which the lunch basket was hanging by the handle.

"Oh, it was those Gipsies, of course," her brother answered. "They took the basket away. But they left the lunch in!" he added a moment later. For he had hurried forward and lifted the basket down. It was not up very high.

"Is it all there?" Janet wanted to know.

"Yes, I guess so," and Dick raised the napkin cover Jane had put over the basket. "Yes, everything is all right," he added.

"Oh, goodie!" exclaimed Janet. "I'm so hungry! Dick," she asked a moment later, "don't you s'pose maybe a bear did this just for fun—took our basket away and hung it on a tree?"

"There aren't any bears here in these woods!" insisted the boy. "It was the Gipsies! Look! Here's another one of their gold bangles."

It was a brass disk, not a gold one, that Dick

picked up, but it was as bright and shining a yellow as the more precious golden metal would have been.

"It's just like the one I found back at the stump-table," he went on. Taking the first bangle from his pocket he held both in the palm of his hand. They were just alike—tiny round, thin disks of brass, with a hole in the edge for stringing.

"The same Gipsy was at both places," said Dick. "I guess it was one of the fortune-tellers. She took our basket and then she left it here."

"Why didn't she eat it?" Janet wanted to know.

"Maybe she wasn't hungry," spoke Dick. "Or maybe she didn't want the other Gipsies to know she had it. So she hung it here and maybe she was coming back after dark and get it."

"Well, she won't get it now, 'cause we have it," and Janet laughed. The pain of the bee sting was almost gone, and she was ready to enjoy the picnic, now that the lunch was found.

"Yes, we have it," said Dick. "And we'd better eat it right away."

"Are you going to eat it here?" his sister asked him. "I'm thirsty and there isn't any water to drink. And I'll be thirstier, when I eat, 'cause I always am."

"We'll go back to the spring by the stump," decided her brother. "I guess we don't have to go to the Gipsy camp now."

"No," agreed Janet. "We don't have to go there now to get our lunch basket, and daddy said we weren't to go to look for Grandma's pin. So we just can't go."

"Yes," agreed Dick. "We'll go back to the stump table now and have our picnic."

Back through the woods tramped the two Wild Cherries. They were a little tired, but they did not mind that for they were thinking of the good things to eat in their lunch basket.

They had not come within sight of the Gipsy tents and the red wagons of the camp near the cranberry bog. The camp was about half a mile farther on from where they had found the hanging basket.

At the spring was half a cocoanut shell for a dipper. Dick filled this and gave his sister

some of the clear, sparkling water. Then he dipped up a drink for himself.

"Now, we're ready to eat," said Janet.

The sandwiches and other things from the basket were spread out on the stump and the children began their picnic lunch. It was half an hour late but it tasted all the better on that account.

"Oh, look!" suddenly cried Janet, pointing to a saucy red squirrel. He had leaped down from the tree and picked up in his teeth a piece of bread the little girl had dropped. For a moment the tiny creature sat up on a dried leaf for a cushion, with the bread in his mouth, looking at the little picnic party. Then, with a whisk of his tail, the red squirrel darted up into a tree. Putting the piece of bread down in a crotch, so it would not fall, "Mr. Rusty Tail," as Dick named him, began to scold in his shrill, chattery voice.

"What makes him do that?" asked Janet, laughing.

"Oh, I guess he's angry 'cause we came to his woods," chuckled Dick. "Red squirrels are always scolding like that, same as blue jays; but

they don't do anything else much. Here you are, Rusty Tail," and Dick tossed a bread crust toward the chattering squirrel. "Have some more!"

The little animal left his perch in the crotch of the tree to come down after the crust and then, carrying it up in his mouth and taking his place once more, he scolded again, louder than at first.

"Maybe he's saying thank you," suggested Janet.

"Maybe," agreed Dick.

The children had almost finished their lunch, stopping now and then to get a drink of water at the spring when suddenly, the silence of the woods was broken by a loud cry of:

"Hay! Hay! Hay!"

"Oh, who's that?" exclaimed Janet.

"Only Mr. Blue Jay!" chuckled Dick. "I guess he wants something to eat same as Mr. Rusty Tail had."

Down out of a tree fluttered a big, bold-looking bird, with blue and white feathers, a crest on his head and a sharp, savage bill. He flew to where some crumbs were scattered, picked

up a bit of cookie and swung up into a tree with it.

Then, holding the piece of cookie down on the branch by one claw, the jay began picking off bits in his beak. While he was doing this, and while Janet and Dick were watching, another jay came fluttering through the glade.

"Hay! Hay!" he called. And then he added another cry that sounded exactly as if he said: "Fish-hook! Fish-hook! Fish-hook!"

"Oh, isn't he funny!" laughed Janet, for each time the jay made this sound he bobbed up and down like a cuckoo popping out of the door in the clock. "What makes him say 'fish-hook,' Dick?"

"I guess maybe he'd like to take a fish-hook and get that piece of cookie away from the other jay," said the boy. "Here's a bit for you," he added, tossing some cookie crumbs to the second jay. The bird flew down after them, picking them up hungrily.

Then, in the air overhead sounded another cry, as though some one were laughing:

"Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"That's a black crow," said Janet. "I know his call."

"Yes, that's a crow," agreed Dick, "and I guess it must be getting late, when the crows begin to fly home. We'd better be getting home ourselves. There's no more lunch to eat."

"All right," agreed Janet. "But we didn't play pirates and dig up any gold."

"Well, we had fun playing Indians on the trail, and we found our lunch and the bangles," said Dick. "I'll give you one to keep," he added, passing to Janet one of the two Gipsy coins he had found.

"Oh, thank you, Dickie," she exclaimed. "I'll pin it on my doll that Grandma gave me."

The children reached home without any other adventures befalling them, and to their mother's question as to whether they had had a good time, Dick answered by saying:

"We had lots of fun, and the Gipsies took our lunch but we got it back and—"

"I got stung by a bee and Dick put mud on it!" broke in Janet, fearing she would not get a chance to tell her share in the day's happenings.

"Oh, those Gipsies!" exclaimed Mrs. Cherry. "I must get your father to do something about them! They are too bold!"

"The police didn't get Grandma's cameo pin back yet; did they?" asked Janet, with faint hope.

"No, dear, they didn't," her mother said, sadly enough.

That night she talked matters over with Mr. Cherry.

"I think we shall go to that camp ourselves," he said, "and take the children with us."

"What for?" asked his wife in surprise.

"To put an end to the idea in the heads of Janet and Dick that the Gipsies have mother's pin," he replied. "As it is now those two Wild Cherries of ours will slip off to that camp every chance they get, if they think they can. Now I don't believe that Gipsy boy took the pin. I think Janet dropped it somewhere around the house, though maybe we shall never find it.

"But if you and I went to the camp, Helen, and asked, before the children, whether the Gipsies knew anything of the pin, and if they said they didn't, then Janet and Dick would be satisfied. They wouldn't want to go there, hoping to get the cameo back."

"Well, perhaps that is a good idea," said Mrs. Cherry, slowly.

So the next afternoon she and her husband, with Dick and Janet, started for the cranberry bog, near where the Gipsies were camped.

"What are you going for?" asked Janet. "Are you going to have your fortune told, Mother?"

"Nonsense!" laughed Mrs. Cherry. "You know it is silly and wrong to think that anyone can tell what is going to happen to you, by a so-called 'fortune' or otherwise. No Gipsy nor any other person can do that."

"Course not!" agreed Dick.

But the children were rather surprised, after hearing their mother say this, to see her and their father walk straight toward the tent in the Gipsy camp, outside of which was a banner with the words:

MADAME DEBORAH
FORTUNE TELLER

"Oh, maybe daddy is going to have his fortune told," whispered Janet.

"Hu!" grunted Dick.

He and his sister followed their parents into the tent of the Gipsy fortune teller. Around

Then Janet caught sight of a dark-faced boy.

the encampment were other tents, and back in the woods were red and yellow wagons, glittering with bits of mirrors and other colored glass. Near the wagons were some horses and dogs.

Dick and Janet looked around. They saw several Gipsy men and women who, however, did not pay much attention to the visitors. Then Janet caught sight of a dark-faced boy, about Dick's age.

"Look! Look!" whispered the girl. "There's the boy who was at our house begging the time I lost Grandma's cameo! There he is!"

CHAPTER X

THE RED WAGON

Mrs. Cherry heard what Janet whispered to Dick.

"Janet," asked her mother, "are you sure it's the same boy?"

"Oh, yes, Mother, I'm sure!" answered Janet.

Mrs. Cherry said something to her husband in a low voice.

"Of course! Yes! That would be a good idea," he replied. "I say, my boy, will you come here a moment?" he went on in a pleasant voice, at the same time motioning with his hand for the Gipsy lad to approach.

"What's the matter?" demanded the boy with the dark hair and eyes. "I don't tell fortunes." He spoke rather rudely.

"No, I don't want you to tell my fortune!" laughed Mr. Cherry. "But I want you to come in while I talk to Madame Deborah."

"She can talk your talk as well as I can," said the boy. "She speaks English and Gipsy talk too."

"I suppose so," and Mr. Cherry smiled. "But I want to talk to you, anyhow. Come on, please!"

One of the Gipsy men, lounging in the entrance to a tent spoke sharply to the lad, using words in a strange language. The boy answered in the same tongue and then slowly advanced toward the tent of the fortune teller.

Meanwhile Madame Deborah, as she called herself, had come to the flap of her tent, to look out and see what all the talk was about. To her Mr. Cherry spoke, saying:

"I want to ask you some questions, Madame Deborah, and also talk to this boy. No, we didn't come to have our fortunes told. I don't believe in such things, but if other folks do, and want to pay for having you tell them things, that's their own affair. But I take it you are a business woman and one of the leaders of this tribe of Gipsies—maybe you are their Queen."

"No, nothing like that," answered Madame Deborah in a gentle voice, and speaking, as Dick said afterward, "just like our school

teacher." In fact the Gipsy woman talked very good English. "I am not the Queen," she went on. "She is in another camp. What is it you wish? Please come in and sit down, you and the children, and as for you, Tamma—"

She looked at the Gipsy boy as if about to order him away.

"He told me to come in," said Tamma, which seemed to be his name.

"Yes, I wish to talk to him and to you about a valuable cameo pin that is missing," said Mr. Cherry.

"I didn't take any pin!" burst out the boy, angrily.

"We Gipsies do not steal, and you should not say we do, even if you believe we cannot tell fortunes!" said Madame Deborah, and she, too, looked angry.

"I'm not saying you did," spoke Mr. Cherry gently. "In fact I am sure you had nothing to do with taking the pin. What I want you to do is to tell my children so, in order that they will not be coming to this camp looking for it. My little girl was wearing her grandmother's cameo pin on the day that this boy—Tamma—

came to our house to ask for something to eat."

"Tamma should not have done that," said Madame Deborah. "We Gipsies do not need to beg." She spoke proudly.

"I was hungry," said Tamma in a low voice, and he looked a bit ashamed of himself with Madame Deborah's black, snapping eyes fixed on him.

"Do not do it again," she said in a low voice. "Is that all you wish of me—to have me tell your children that we did not take the pin?" she asked.

"Yes," answered the father of Dick and Janet. The children had seated themselves on little camp stools in the tent, and were gazing curiously about. It was very clean in Madame Deborah's canvas house. There was a table covered with a bright red cloth, and on the table was a shining, brass, kerosene lamp. The tent was divided into two parts by yellow curtains, and in the second part was a bed heaped high with pillows and blankets, a gay red and yellow spread covered everything.

"Why should you think we took the cameo pin?" asked Madame Deborah.

Then Mr. Cherry told the story of Grandma's visit, and how Janet was allowed to wear the pin a little while.

"Soon after that it was missed," went on her father. "And we thought perhaps Tamma might have picked it up by mistake. However the police say he did not, and now I want you to tell my children that the pin isn't here. That will keep them from wanting to come to this camp and, perhaps, save them from being lost in the woods."

"It is a strange request," and the fortune-teller smiled. "But I will tell them as you wish. The Gipsies did not take your Grandmother's pin," she went on, smiling again this time at Dick and Janet. "And you should not come to our camp if your father does not wish it. Though you will always be welcome," she added, kindly.

"But they mustn't come," quickly said Mrs. Cherry. "I'd be afraid the dogs might bite them!"

"Our dogs will not bite," said the Gipsy woman. "But it is better that the children do not come, I think. Is this all you wish of me?"

"Yes, thank you," said Mr. Cherry. "I

know you Gipsies have camped here for several years, and you have done no harm. I feel sure you did not take the pin, Tamma."

"Course I didn't," said the boy, shuffling his feet about in the dirt as he stood near the flap of the tent.

"All right," said the children's father. "Remember that, my two Wild Cherries, and don't come to this camp again."

"Two Wild Cherries—what a pretty name!" murmured the fortune-teller.

"It fits them," said their mother. "They are a bit wild at times."

"All children are—it is their nature," and Madame Deborah nodded and smiled again. "You do not wish your fortune told?" she asked, turning to the children's mother.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Cherry. "We only came on the children's account, and we shall be going now."

"I hope you find the cameo pin," murmured the Gipsy, and she held back the tent flap so they could get out.

Dick pulled at his mother's dress and hoarsely whispered:

"Mother! Mother!"

"What is it?" she inquired, looking at him.

"Are you going to ask which one it was took our lunch basket and hung it on a tree like a hornets' nest?"

"Oh, yes!" and Mrs. Cherry turned to her husband. She spoke to him in a low voice. He laughed and remarked,

"It will do no harm to inquire, I suppose." Then, turning to Madame Deborah, he said: "Did one of the boys, as a joke, take my children's lunch basket the other day?"

"Lunch basket!" repeated the fortune-teller. "Lunch basket— Oh, perhaps Tamma may know something of that. I shall ask him! She spoke rapidly to the Gipsy lad in his own language and he replied to her. Then, in English, Madame Deborah explained:

"Tamma, he is sometimes a little wild, like—"

"Like my Cherries!" laughed the father of Dick and Janet.

"Yes. And he took the basket for fun. He did not intend to steal it—no—never! It was only for fun, and he was watching your boy and girl from behind the bushes. If they had not found the basket as they did, he would have

returned it to them. He is sorry; are you not, Tamma?"

Tamma murmured something, it might have been that he said he was sorry, or it might have been almost anything. Mr. Cherry did not bother further about it.

"Did Tamma lose the bangles?" whispered Janet. She hoped she and Dick could keep those they had found.

"Oh, about the bangles," went on Mr. Cherry. "My children picked up some in the woods, where Tamma must have dropped them as he took the basket."

"It is no matter," and the fortune-teller smiled at the children. "Let them keep the bangles—we have plenty more," which was indeed the truth.

"Thank you," murmured Janet.

"You are welcome, my dear. We want you to know that we Gipsies are not so bad as many think. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" echoed the Wild Cherries as they left the tent.

Tamma shuffled off by himself, glancing sideways out of his black eyes at Dick and Janet. The visitors started away from the camp, the

children rather quiet because they were thinking of what had happened. Madame Deborah stood in her tent, watching the Cherries until a turn in the path hid them from view. None of the other Gipsies seemed to pay any attention to the callers. They sat in silence. Even the dogs did not bark or growl.

As Mr. and Mrs. Cherry, with the children, passed out of sight of the camp, along the path through the cranberry bog, they could hear behind them the murmur of voices—voices of the Gipsy men and women.

"Do you think they are angry because you spoke as you did to Tamma and Madame Deborah?" asked Mrs. Cherry of her husband.

"Oh, no," he said. "I guess it isn't the first time the Gipsies have been talked to when things were missing. Maybe they are honest, but they have the name—at least some tribes have—of taking things."

"Well, if Tamma didn't take Grandma's pin—who did?" demanded Dick.

"It's hard to say," answered his father. "Maybe we shall find it some day."

"I'm afraid not," sighed his wife.

Dick and Janet had a wonderful story to tell

their boy and girl chums next day about the visit to the Gipsy camp.

"Did they cook things in a pot over a camp fire?" asked Henry Merton.

"Some of them did," answered Dick. "But I saw oil stoves in one or two tents."

"Did you see any kidnapped children?" asked Lulu Wilson, in a whisper.

"Course we didn't!" laughed Janet. "Gipsies don't kidnap you."

"Sadie Clark said they did," declared Mary Nestor.

"Well, we didn't see any," spoke Dick. "I wish I had one of their dogs, though."

"Mother wouldn't let you keep it," said his sister.

"Well, maybe she would," Dick retorted. "I'm going to ask her."

However just then Sam Ward suggested that they have a game of hide-and-go-seek, and while this was being arranged Dick forgot about the Gipsy dog, which was just as well. For his mother never would have consented to let him have one, I'm sure.

"All ready!" called Jim Blake, who had been chosen to "blind" while the others hid. "I'll

count up to five hundred by fives, and then I'm coming! Get ready!" He leaned up against a tree—for the children were playing in the grove where Janet and Dick had eaten their picnic lunch a few days before. "Five—ten—fifteen—" counted Jim.

Away scampered the boys and girls, looking for secret places to hide, from which they might rush in, back to the tree where Jim was "blinding." They hoped to be able to get there while he was out searching for them, in which case they could touch the tree and cry:

"Home free!"

"I know a good place where we can hide," said Dick to his sister.

"Where?" she asked.

"In that hole under the tree—the place where we went for the pirate cave and I caught my foot."

"Oh, I'd be afraid there," said Janet.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Dick. "It's all right if you don't go in too far. Come on!"

So he and Janet rushed on through the woods toward the "pirate cave," as they called it. But, by some chance, the two Wild Cherries took the wrong path.

"I don't see that cave!" exclaimed Janet, looking about when they had run some little distance away from the "home" tree.

"I don't, either," agreed Dick. "Well, we'll find another place to hide. Come on!"

They went deeper into the woods, their feet rustling over the dried leaves. Suddenly Janet stopped and caught Dick's hand, pulling him to a stop.

"Look! Look!" she whispered. "A red wagon!"

Just ahead of them, under a tree, was a red wagon, with yellow stripes around it, and on the corners were glittering pieces of colored glass, while on either side of the vehicle was a big mirror.

"Oh, it's one of the Gipsy wagons!" cried Dick.

"Yes," agreed his sister. "But what's it doing here all alone in the woods?"

"Maybe they lost it," Dick said.

"Pooh! You can't lose anything as big as a wagon!" declared the girl. "But maybe they forgot it."

She and Dick walked closer, trying to make as little noise as possible. There was no sign

of life near the red wagon. No horse was hitched to it, nor were any dogs asleep under it, as was the case back at the Gipsy camp. And, as the children approached nearer, they saw no dark-skinned man or woman in the wagon.

There was a door at the back of it, and a short flight of steps leading up. Looking inside, Dick and Janet saw that the wagon was fitted up like a little house. They could see a stove, a table which could be let down against the side and some stools. Farther on, up toward the front of the wagon, were some beds, or, rather, "bunks," like the berths in a Pullman sleeping car.

"That's one of the wagons the Gipsies live in when they don't live in tents at camp," explained Dick.

"Yes, I guess so," agreed Janet.

And then a wild idea came into Janet's head.

"Oh, Dick!" she exclaimed, "this would be a dandy place to hide so Jim couldn't find us! Let's go in the red wagon! Let's hide there!"

Dick hesitated a moment. He looked back through the woods. Faint and far off sounded the voices of the boys and girls playing hide-

and-go-seek. Jim had finished counting and was now searching.

"Let's hide in here!" whispered Janet again.

"S'posin' there's a Gipsy in there?" suggested her brother.

"If there is—we'll come out," said Janet. "But I don't guess there is! Come on—we'll hide in the red wagon!"

And the two Wild Cherries climbed the little flight of steps and entered the red Gipsy van. They went softly in at first, but as no one called to them they advanced more boldly.

"Oh, isn't it cute in here?" murmured Janet, as they walked through a sort of aisle in the middle of the wagon, and found themselves in the bedroom, with the two berths on either side. "I love it in here. I wish—"

"Hark!" suddenly exclaimed Dick. "I hear a noise!"

A moment later there was a loud slam, as though a door had been shut.

CHAPTER XI

JIGGLES AND WIGGLES

DICK looked at Janet and Janet looked at Dick. Thus the two Wild Cherries looked at each other.

"Did you—now did you hear that?" asked Janet in a whisper.

"Yes—yes, I did," and Dick also whispered. "Did you?"

Janet nodded her head to show that she had. Then she asked:

"What was it?"

"I guess the door banged shut," suggested Dick. "I can open it again. You don't need to be scared," he said quickly, as he saw Janet's lips quivering, as they sometimes did just before her eyes filled with tears.

"I—I—now I'm not scared!" she exclaimed. "But maybe you can't open the door if it's locked!"

"Who would lock it?" demanded Dick.

"Maybe a Gipsy might come along to see if his wagon was all right, and maybe—"

Dick did not wait for his sister to finish what she started to say, but rushed toward the back door of the wagon. It really had a door, just like those in your house, only smaller, of course, and it had a knob, hinges and a lock. Dick turned the brass knob. The door swung open, letting in a flood of golden, yellow sunshine from out of doors.

"See!" cried Dick in delight. "It's all right. No Gipsies or anything. I guess the wind blew the door shut."

"I guess so," agreed Janet, her fears now over.

"This sure is a dandy place to hide," went on Dick. "Jim will never find us here. Let's go back in the place where the beds are."

"And we can shut the door," his sister added. "Long as we can open it again, it's all right to shut it; and then Jim can't find us so easy."

"All right," said Dick, so the door to the Gipsy wagon was shut again. Back into the little front bedroom of the van—the room with two cute bunks, one on either side went the children. The beds were all made up, with

clean sheets, pillow cases and bright blankets.

"Oh, I'd just love to lie down on one of those beds," said Janet.

"So would I," spoke her brother. "Come on, let's do it!" he proposed. "The Gipsies won't care. Maybe they don't want this wagon any more, 'cause they left it out here in the woods all alone."

"Maybe," murmured Janet. The gay van was certainly off all by itself in the woods, some distance from the camp, and from the other wagons, the tents, the horses, the dogs and Madame Deborah, the fortune-teller.

"We'll just lie down here on the beds," went on Janet. "And after a while, when Jim can't find us and gives up, then we can walk in free."

"And we won't tell where we hid, either," said Dick. "Then we can have this place for another time."

Janet nodded her head and, stepping, on a low stool near one of the bunks, she scrambled up.

"Oh, it's so nice and soft!" she murmured as she stretched out.

"They're nicer beds than in sleeping cars,"

said Dick. For he and Janet had often traveled in Pullman sleepers.

"Now we must keep still," suggested his sister. "Jim might come this way to look for us and he'd hear us—so keep still."

"All right," Dick agreed as he wiggled himself into a comfortable nest in the soft bed.

Meanwhile, back at the tree where Jim had "blinded" until the others were hidden, the game went on. At first two or three of the boys and girls got "in free," running up and touching the home tree while Jim was off looking for them.

Then Jim caught sight of Lulu Wilson peering out from behind a bush.

"Tit-tat Lulu!" cried Jim, and running back he touched the tree before Lulu could do so. This meant Lulu would have to "blind," and do the searching next time.

But Jim was not yet done. There were others, beside the two Wild Cherries, hiding out and these he must find, unless he called:

"Givie up! Givie up! Come in, come in, wherever you are!"

But Jim was not yet ready to do this. He wanted to search a bit more before giving up.

Those who had gotten in free, or who had been "tit-tatted," and seen before they got a chance to touch the home tree, now gathered around it while Jim searched for those still out. Tom Jenkins, who had crawled inside a hollow log, stuck his head out to take a look and see if the coast were clear.

"Cucumber! Cucumber!" suddenly called Sadie Clark, as she saw him. This meant for Tom to run in and touch the tree while he had the chance, since Jim was some distance away. The children used the word "cucumber" instead of "come on in," thinking Jim might not know what it meant.

But Jim did, for he had played this game before. Thinking that one of the players was making a dash for the tree, to touch it and get in free, Jim started back. Seeing this Sadie called:

"Tobacco! Tobacco!"

This was intended as a warning for Tom to crawl back in the log, which he did.

But when Jim saw no one coming to the home tree he thought it was a false alarm, and walked

farther off to spy some one. Then Sadie called once more:

"Cucumber! Cucumber!"

This meant the coast was again clear and for Tom to rush in, which he did. Out of the log he wiggled. Jim saw him and there was a close race, but Tom won, and got home free.

"I'm going to give up the others," Jim said. "It takes too long. Come in! Come in wherever you are!" he shouted. "Givie up! Givie up!"

This was the signal for all who were still hiding out to come in free. Several did, but not Dick and Janet.

"Where are the two Wild Cherries?" asked Henry Merton.

"They picked out a good hiding place, wherever it is," said Jim. Then he called again: "Come in! Come in wherever you are! Givie up! Givie up!"

But though others took up the call, there was no answering shout from Dick and Janet, and, after a while, the game went on without them.

"I guess they must have gone home," said Mary Nestor.

"Maybe," agreed Lulu Wilson.

But Dick and Janet had not gone home. They were still in the red wagon—the Gipsy van off by itself in the woods.

It was very still and quiet in the red wagon. Outside could be heard the chirp of grasshoppers in the field at the edge of the woods, and birds sang as they flitted through the trees. Now and then a crow would seem to be laughing at something as he croaked:

"Haw! Haw! Haw!"

Or a blue jay would perch on a limb, cock his crested head to one side, and yell:

"Fish-hook! Fish-hook! Fish-hook!"

He would teeter up and down as he called this, and then change to:

"Hay! Hay! Hay!"

At first the sounds were loud in the ears of Janet and Dick. But, after a while, even the loud voices of the jays grew fainter and farther off. It seemed to become very still and quiet, as if night were settling down.

And the reason was—Dick and Janet had fallen asleep on the soft beds in the red Gipsy wagon.

Sound asleep they had fallen, almost without

realizing it, so gently had slumber stolen upon them. At first they had closed their eyes, meaning to keep them shut only a moment or two. But each time they opened and closed them it was harder to make them stay open when they tried it again.

And so they were asleep while the other boys and girls were calling to them, and while Jim shouted:

"Come in! Come in wherever you are! Givie up! Givie up!"

Dick and Janet did not hear him.

After a while—a long while it was, too, more than an hour—Dick was suddenly awakened by what he afterward said were "jiggles." He awoke to find himself being "jiggled" in the soft, comfortable berth of the Gipsy wagon.

About the same time Janet awakened. She said it was the "wiggles" that caused her to open her eyes.

"Dick! Dick!" called his sister. "What's the matter? What makes the wagon wiggle so?"

"I—now—I don't know," he replied. "I'm jiggling same as you are."

He sat up on the bunk. Then both children knew what had happened.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Janet. "The Gipsies are taking us away in the wagon! The wagon is going away with us in it!"

"I—I guess it is!" faltered Dick.

There was no doubt of it. A horse had been hitched to the red van and, with the two Wild Cherries inside, it was being hauled off through the woods.

CHAPTER XII

GIPSY LIFE

SURPRISE held the two children quiet for a few moments after the "jiggles" and "wiggles" had awakened them, and made them know they were being taken away. Then Janet slipped out of the little bed to the floor of the wagon and cried:

"Oh, Dick! What shall we do? The Gipsies are taking us away!"

"We got to do something!" decided her brother.

"I thought you said Gipsies didn't kidnap children!" and tears were now in Janet's eyes.

"That's what daddy said," explained Dick.

"But they're taking us away!" Janet couldn't understand it at all. "They're taking us away in the red wagon, Dick!" she almost screamed.

"Maybe they don't know it," suggested Dick as the idea suddenly came to him.

"What do you mean?" his sister asked.

"I mean maybe they don't know we crawled in here to hide."

Janet thought this over for a moment while the Gipsy van continued to roll and rumble its way through the woods, swaying from side to side over a rough road. Then the little girl said:

"Maybe they didn't! I guess they didn't see us crawl inside to hide, else they would have told Jim and he could have found us."

"That's it!" exclaimed Dick. "They didn't see us come in, and the back door blew shut and they don't know we're in here and they're moving away and taking us with them—but they don't know it!"

"I guess maybe the Gipsies are good—don't you think so, Dick?" asked Janet, hopefully.

"Sure they are," he said. "They'll let us go soon as they know we're in here. I'll go open the door and holler and then they'll stop the horse and we can jump out and go home."

"Yes," agreed Janet. "We don't want to jump out of the wagon while it's going, 'cause maybe we might sprain our legs, or something."

"I'll go open the door," offered her brother.

He made his way from the front part of the van, where the sleeping bunks were built in, to the back door—the only door, in fact, for there was no front one. Dick passed through the "kitchen" of the van. It was the place where, in a small cupboard, he could see packages of food—canned corn, tomatoes and other things. There were also pasteboard boxes of cookies and crackers, the same kind Mrs. Cherry had often sent Janet and Dick to get at the store.

Dick found himself at the door of the van—the same door that had once slammed shut, frightening him and his sister. The boy grasped the shiny, brass knob and tried to turn it.

"Can't you get it open?" asked Janet, who had followed Dick to the rear of the van.

"It seems to be—now—sorter stuck!" her brother said, as he pulled and tugged at the door.

"I'll help," she offered.

But the two children, pushing with all their might, did not open the door. Then Janet said what Dick thought.

"It's locked!" she cried.

"I—I—now—I guess it is!" and Dick's voice trembled.

"Oh! Oh!" gasped Janet. "We—we're locked in!" That was all she could say for a moment or two. "But, Dick!" she cried, "we got to get out! They're taking us away, and maybe they don't know we're here, but we got to get out!"

"Yes," agreed Dick, giving another tug at the door, "we got to get out!"

However this was easier said than done. The door was either stuck or locked, and the two Wild Cherries could not open it. They began to feel frightened. Certainly it was enough to frighten older children than were Dick and Janet—to be carried away by Gipsies, even if the wandering tribe didn't really mean to kidnap them.

"Look out and see if you can see anybody," suggested Janet, pointing to the glass windows on either side of the van. There was also a window in the door, but so high up the children could not see through it. The other windows were on either side of the kitchen of the van,

and were covered with lace curtains—small, square windows they were.

Dick looked from one and Janet from the other. They peered out anxiously, pressing their little noses quite flat against the glass.

"All I can see are trees and bushes," sighed Janet.

"That's all I can see on my side—trees and bushes," added Dick. "We're going through the woods."

"And it's getting dark," added Janet, as she saw long shadows cast by the sun slanting through the trees. "It's getting dark and—and—the Gipsies have got us! Oh the Gipsies have got us!" She was ready to cry again.

"Don't cry," begged Dick. "We—we'll—now—do something."

"What?" asked his sister, holding back her sobs.

"We'll knock on the windows," said Dick. "Then whoever is driving the horse will hear us and let us out."

"Oh, yes," agreed Janet. "We'll knock on the windows."

The children did this, Janet pounding on the

glass with her little fists, and Dick tapping with his pocket knife. But the Gipsy van kept on moving through the woods, and the driver gave no sign that he heard the children.

"We got to knock harder," decided Dick.

"If we do we'll break the windows," said his sister. "And we don't want to do that."

"No," agreed Dick, "we don't. I guess maybe we'd better pound on the door," he added. "We can kick that—on the part where the window isn't—and we can hammer it as hard as we like. Then maybe he will hear us."

So they pounded with their fists and kicked with their feet on the back door of the van, but it did no good. On rumbled the red and yellow Gipsy wagon through the woods. It was growing into late afternoon now, as the children could see by looking through the side windows. The shadows were growing long in the woods.

"I guess the driver must be deaf," decided Dick as their continued kicking and pounding brought no answer.

"Deaf in both ears," added Janet. "But we can do something else, Dick."

"What?" he asked.

"We can holler," said Janet. "We can holler like anything—same as we do when we're playing hide-and-go-seek—and maybe he'll hear us even if he is deaf. Come on—let's holler."

The children united their voices in loud shouts of:

"Let us out! Let us out! We're locked in! Let us out!"

They kept this up for some time, now and then changing off to pound and kick at the door. But nothing came of it. The rumble of the van over the rough road of the woods, and the deafness of the Gipsy driver (for, later, they learned that he was deaf) prevented the children's calls for help from being heard.

"I—I guess we aren't ever going to get out of here," said Janet sadly at last.

"Oh, yes we will—sometime," said Dick. "Anyhow we can get something to eat. There's lots of things in this kitchen."

"Oh, that's so," agreed his sister as she looked on the shelves of the food closet which had glass doors. "But did we ought to take it, Dick?" In her excitement Janet wasn't talking exactly right, but it didn't matter much.

"Sure we can take it," declared her brother.

"If we can't get out to go home to our own supper, we got to eat the Gipsy's supper. I guess they won't care."

"If they do," said Janet, "we can tell 'em, when we get out, that daddy will pay them."

"Sure," said Dick.

"We could even cook if we wanted to," added Janet, looking at the oil stove.

"No, I guess we better not do that," Dick said. "We might set fire to the wagon."

"Yes," Janet nodded, "that's so. Well, we can make believe we're on another picnic. Let's see what there is to eat, Dick."

The children rummaged through the wall cupboard, which was neatly kept. They found some boxes of crackers, some of cookies, a piece of cheese and a little smoked beef in a glass jar.

"This will make a fine picnic lunch," said Dick. "We can make believe we're shipwrecked on a desert island."

"Is there anything to drink on the desert island?" asked Janet, laughing as she ate some of the crackers and smoked beef. "This is salty and I'm thirsty," she added. The children were feeling better now.

Dick looked about the kitchen and saw a covered jar. Taking off the lid he found in it fresh water, and gave Janet a glassful. Then he drank some himself.

"Now it's just like a real picnic, 'ceptin', maybe, we ought to have lemonade," said Janet with a happy little sigh. She was not at all frightened now.

"I could make lemonade if I had lemons," said Dick. "There's sugar in that box," and he pointed to one so marked.

"Oh, well," laughed his sister, "we'll make believe this water is lemonade," and she took another sip. "It's real sweet!" she went on.

"Mine's kinder sour!" chuckled Dick, entering into the spirit of the fun of "make believe."

The children ate as good a meal as they could on what they found in the red van.

"It's living just like the Gipsies; isn't it?" asked Dick, sighing contentedly.

"Yes," agreed Janet. "But it's getting dark, and I don't want to stay here all night—without mother and—"

Her voice once more sounded as though she might cry.

"We'll get out of here pretty soon," declared

her brother. "When the wagon stops then it won't make so much noise and we can holler a lot more, and pound and kick on the door and they'll let us out."

"That'll be good," sighed Janet. "I want to sleep in my own little bed at home, but these little beds are nice," and she looked toward the bunks in front. "It's getting real dark," she went on. "I don't like the dark."

"I guess maybe I could light the lamp," offered Dick, for there was a brass hanging-lamp in the kitchen. "Once I lighted a lamp in our house for Jane, when the electric lights went out."

"Has you got any matches?" asked Janet.

"No, but maybe there's some in a box near the stove, like where Jane keeps hers," said the little boy.

He looked, and, surely enough, found some matches. As he said, he once lighted a lamp for Jane, the cook, and now he very carefully struck a match and touched it to the wick of the oil lamp after Janet had helped him raise the glass chimney.

A moment later the soft, mellow glow of the lamp filled the Gipsy van, and Janet felt hap-

pier, for the dark seemed to bring many fears.

"Now we're like real Gipsies," chuckled Dick. "But if I could get that door open—"

He stopped suddenly, for he and Janet heard loud voices outside, and, a second later, the red van stopped with such a jerk that the children nearly fell off their chairs.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SEARCH

About the middle of the afternoon, when the game of hide-and-go-seek began, Grandma Cherry, who had been doing some mending for Janet and Dick, said to Mrs. Cherry.

"I think I'll go out and walk around the side porch. I might just happen to see my lost cameo pin."

"Oh, dear! I'm so sorry about that!" said Mrs. Cherry. "I'm afraid you will never find it."

"Oh, I might," and Grandma smiled cheerfully. "I think it came loose from Janet's dress, fell on the porch and rolled off. It may be somewhere in the grass. I know we have looked everywhere for it, but I might just happen to see it this time."

"I hope you do," sighed Janet's mother. "Anyhow it will do you good to go out in the air a bit after sewing so steadily."

So Grandma walked out on the side porch,

and around in the grass near it. But even with her strongest glasses, which she used for reading and sewing, she could not see the gleam of the gold and cameo pin—the beautiful cameo carved from a sea shell.

"I guess it is gone forever," she gently sighed. "Poor little Janet! I mustn't make her feel sad about it, though." Going into the house Grandma asked: "Where are my two Wild Cherries? Isn't it about time they came home to get ready for supper?"

"Why, so it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Cherry, looking at the clock. "I had no idea it was so late! They ought to be coming along now. They went to the woods, just this side of the cranberry bog, to play games with the other children."

"The cranberry bog!" exclaimed Grandma Cherry. "Isn't that where the Gipsies camp?"

"Near there, yes. But I have told Janet and Dick to keep away from the camp. Not that the Gipsies would harm the children, but it is just as well for them not to go there. After our talk with the fortune-teller the other day, I think Janet and Dick know that the poor Gipsy boy didn't take your pin."

"I hope he didn't," said Grandma, blinking behind her glasses.

Mrs. Cherry went out to look up and down the street for a sign of her children. When they went to the woods they generally came home by a short cut across the fields. But neither Janet nor Dick was in sight now.

However Mrs. Cherry did see Jim Blake walking slowly along, and she called to him, asking:

"Have you seen Janet and Dick?"

"Yes'm, they were playing hide-and-go-seek with us in the woods," Jim answered. "I was blinding and they ran off and hid. But they wouldn't come in when I hollered 'givie up,' so we played without them."

"And didn't they come, later, back to join in the game?" asked Mrs. Cherry.

"No'm, they didn't. We played quite a while after that and they didn't come back. I guess they found a good place to hide and they stayed in it. I couldn't find 'em, and neither could anybody else."

"They shouldn't stay away hiding like that," spoke Mrs. Cherry. "If you see them, Jim,

please tell them to come home. It will soon be supper time."

"I'll be glad of it!" laughed the boy. "Yes'm, I'll tell Janet and Dick if I see 'em."

He walked on, whistling, and Mrs. Cherry went back in the house.

"Where are the children?" asked Grandma Cherry.

"Oh, off playing somewhere in the woods. It would be just like my Wild Cherries to forget all about the hide-and-go-seek game and start something make-believe of their own. They'll be along pretty soon, I guess. When they get hungry it's better for them than an alarm clock."

"I'll make them some cookies," offered Grandma, as she started for the kitchen. "That cook of yours doesn't know how to make cookies for children, though she's good in lots of other ways. I'll make some of my old-fashioned cookies."

Grandma Cherry and Mrs. Cherry were busy about the house for some time after this before either of them thought of again looking at the clock. And when they did, the hands pointed to five.

"My goodness! Those children should be here now!" exclaimed Mrs. Cherry. "I wonder what's keeping them."

She went to the door to look out, and Grandma followed, but there was no sign of Janet and Dick. However Lulu Wilson was just coming back from the store where she had gone to buy a yeast cake.

"Oh, Lulu, did you see Janet and Dick?" asked their mother.

"Not since they went away to play hide-and-coop," answered Lulu. Sometimes the game of hide-and-go-seek was called "hide-and-coop," because sometimes those who hid themselves used to let it be known they were safely stowed away by calling: "Coop!"

"Just where were you playing?" asked Mrs. Cherry. "I'm afraid I'll have to send after them."

"It was right in the woods, near the big stump and the spring where we have picnics," said Lulu.

"Oh, I know where you mean," Mrs. Cherry replied. "I'll send Jerry there. Oh, Jerry," she called to the hired man who was working in the garden, "will you please go to the picnic

stump and call Janet and Dick to supper? They must be playing some game and have forgotten about coming home."

"Just like these Wild Cherries!" chuckled Jerry, but he did not mind walking to the woods, for his back ached from pulling out weeds.

Supper was nearly ready, and Grandma had taken from the oven a plate of her famous cookies, but still the children had not come home, and the afternoon shadows were growing longer as the sun went down in the West. Then Grandma saw Jerry coming back across the lots.

"But the children aren't with him," she said.

"They aren't?" exclaimed Mrs. Cherry. "Those little tykes! I wonder where they can have gone?"

Jerry stalked up to the door, shaking his head.

"I looked all around the picnic ground, Mrs. Cherry," he reported. "but there wasn't a sign of Janet or Dick."

"Did you call?" asked Grandma.

"Yes'm, I did, and real loud, too. But they didn't answer."

"They must have gone to another part of the

woods, and are coming home some other way," decided Mrs. Cherry. She was not anxious yet —though she felt she would be pretty soon, if the children didn't arrive.

Mr. Cherry came in from the store, greeting his wife and mother.

"Well, where are my wild ones?" he asked, looking about.

"Off in the woods somewhere," his wife answered. "It isn't the first time they have been late for supper. I'm afraid you'll have to scold them a little, Robert."

"I think so, myself," he agreed. "Maybe I'd better go take a look," he added. "I know where that picnic stump is."

"Oh, dear! Supper will be spoiled!" his wife sighed.

Mr. Cherry hurried to the woods and looked about in places where he knew Dick and Janet had played in times past. He even went to the "pirate cave," where Dick had been caught by the foot, but the children were not there.

Nor did the shouts of Mr. Cherry bring any answer.

"I wonder if those children could have gone to the Gipsy camp?" thought their father. "I

told them not to, still, they may have imagined they had a good reason. But if I go there now, looking for them, they'll be worried at home because I don't come back. My goodness! Wild Cherries is certainly a good name for those tykes!"

Mr. Cherry hurried back to the house.

"Oh, didn't you find them?" his wife asked, showing the disappointment she felt.

"No, they weren't there," he answered. "I think they may have gone to the Gipsy camp."

"Oh, they wouldn't!" his wife exclaimed. "They wouldn't do that!"

"They might. Anyhow I'm going there to inquire. I'll go in the auto by the road. It's a little longer, but if Dick and Janet are there I can bring them home with me. They'll be tired."

"Won't you have supper first?" asked Grandma Cherry.

"No, not until I find those children. It won't take me long."

Calling Jerry to bring around the automobile, Mr. Cherry was soon ready to set off for the Gipsy camp in search of the two lost children.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE WOODS

For a time Mr. Cherry and Jerry, the hired man, drove along in the auto toward the cranberry bog without speaking. It was fast getting dark and Mr. Cherry was more worried than he had told anyone—even his wife. At last Jerry spoke, saying:

"Maybe Dick and Janet stayed to supper with the Gipsies."

"Oh, I hardly think they would do that," said their father.

"They might, if they were hungry," went on Jerry. "Or maybe those Gipsies are keeping the children there."

"They wouldn't do that—Gipsies don't kidnap children—those are all silly stories," said the father of the two Wild Cherries.

"Um," was all Jerry answered. He had his own opinion about Gipsies—right or wrong.

It did not take long for the swift automobile

to reach the cranberry bog, and from there it was but a short run to the Gipsy camp. Gathered about the tents and wagons were the dark-skinned men and women, also the boys and girls. The snapping, black or dark brown eyes of the Gipsies gleamed in the light of several fires that were blazing, and their white teeth glistened in the flickering flames.

As Mr. Cherry and Jerry leaped from the car and walked into the camp, some of the dogs began to bark. They barked, it seemed, at strangers after dark, though not in the daytime.

"Quiet, Zeppa! Down, Gar! Quiet!" called a Gipsy man, and the dogs stopped their barks and growls.

"Are my children here?" exclaimed Mr. Cherry as he stalked into the circle of firelight near where a big kettle was steaming on three poles straddling over a blaze. "I mean Dick and Janet," he went on, as he looked about at the Gipsies.

"There are no children here but our own," said one of the men in a quiet voice. He took from his mouth a short, black pipe as he spoke, and blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"You know whom I mean," went on Mr. Cherry as he caught sight of a woman coming from a tent on which was a sign "fortune-teller." The woman smiled, showing her white teeth.

"Yes, I know," she said in a soft voice. "You are the father of Dick and Janet—the two Wild Cherries. I know—they came to my tent about the cameo pin, with you and your wife. Nice children they are, even if they are wild," and she laughed a little.

"But are they here?" demanded Mr. Cherry. "We can't find them—they went off in the woods to play—near here I guess—and they haven't come home."

"Your children are not here," answered Madame Deborah quietly. "I tell you the truth, sir, they are not here. You are a wise man—you know that the silly stories people tell about Gipsies are false—we do not harm children, or take them away. And we have not seen your boy or girl. Do I not speak the truth?" she asked, turning to the circle of Gipsies about her, and saying something in their own language.

"Yes! Yes! They are not here!" mur-

mured several of the men and women, speaking in English.

"Well, where in the world can they be?" murmured Mr. Cherry, and he seemed to feel a chill of fear in his heart. "Where can Janet and Dick have gone?"

"Tell me about it!" urged Madame Deborah. "Perhaps I can help."

"You can't find them by fortune-telling!" exclaimed Mr. Cherry. "I don't believe in such stuff!"

"I know—you are a wise man," laughed the Gipsy woman. "But maybe I am wise also—in my own way. Tell me where the children were last seen."

Mr. Cherry related how Janet and Dick had gone to the woods to play, but had not come home with the other children—nor had they been seen since they went to the first hiding place.

Listening to all this, Madame Deborah seemed to think for a minute. Then she talked to some of the other Gipsies in their own language, and waited for them to speak. Suddenly one of the men uttered a cry as if he had unexpectedly remembered something, and Mr.

Cherry heard the name Kobah spoken several times.

Then Madame Deborah raised her hand for silence and, turning to Mr. Cherry, she spoke.

"It may be that your children have followed Kobah," she said.

"Who is Kobah?" asked Mr. Cherry, wonderingly.

"He is one of our men," answered the fortune-teller. "But he has gone to visit another tribe in his wagon. He left his wagon off in the woods, not far from where you say your children went to play. Just before dark Kobah went with his horses to the woods, hitched them to his wagon and drove away to the other tribe. It may be that your children, seeing the wagon go through the woods, followed it."

"Do you mean that Kobah would take them for a ride?" asked Mr. Cherry.

"It may be that he would," answered Madame Deborah. "Kobah is kind and loves children."

"And it would be just like my Wild Cherries to ask for a ride in a Gipsy wagon," said Mr. Cherry with a little smile. "They would not

think that was any harm, as long as they kept away from the camp as I told them to. But they would not ride this long," he said. "They would ask Kobah to set them down or take them home before this, I am sure."

"It would be of little use for them to ask Kobah," said the fortune-teller. "He is very deaf —he hears hardly at all, and he does not talk or understand English. So it may be that the Wild Cherries are following after the red and yellow wagon of Kobah."

"Yes, I think that's what they may have done," agreed Mr. Cherry. "Well, I can follow him, and catch up to him for my auto will go faster than his horses. But which road did he take? Where is the other camp of Gipsies where he was going?"

"Zut will show you the way—Zut will ride with you," and Madame Deborah motioned to one of the younger Gipsy men, speaking to him rapidly in his own tongue. He nodded and smiled in answer.

"I go with you in your car and show you," he said to Mr. Cherry.

"Well," remarked Jerry in a low voice as they started back toward the automobile, "I

never thought I'd be ridin' with a Gipsy."

"I think we shall soon find the children," said Mr. Cherry to the hired man. "They thought, very likely, it would be lots of fun to follow that one red wagon."

"Maybe they hitched on behind," suggested Jerry.

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised," admitted the father of the two Wild Cherries.

Once more they were in the auto on their way through the woods, searching for the lost ones.

But meanwhile, Dick and Janet were getting into more trouble.

You remember that after they had eaten in the Gipsy wagon, they lighted the brass hanging lamp, and, soon after that the wagon stopped with a sudden jerk and there were loud shoutings in the dark woods near them.

"Oh, Dick!" cried Janet, "what you s'pose it is?"

"I don't know," the boy answered, "Lessen maybe it's robbers stopping the Gipsy man who's driving this wagon."

"Oh—robbers!" gasped Janet.

"I only said maybe," spoke Dick. "Listen!"

They could hear the murmur of voices, and then it seemed some one gave a cry of surprise. At the same moment Janet caught Dick by the arm and pointed to the back door of the van, exclaiming:

"Look! It's open!"

Surely enough, it was. The door swung freely to and fro, letting out a flood of yellow light into the dark woods. There seemed to be no one at the rear of the Gipsy wagon—the talking and voices now all sounded up at the front end.

"We can get out, Dick!" whispered Janet. "Let's run away!"

"Yes—we can get out!" he whispered back.

Hand in hand the children stole on tiptoe to the back door of the van. Quietly, and making hardly any more noise than two little mice would have made, they crept down the few steps. A moment later they were running along through the woods—running along a rough wagon road, filled with ruts and holes. It was because the wagon wheels went into one of these ruts that it had stopped so suddenly and with such a jolt.

"It—it's terrible dark!" whispered Janet as

she clasped Dick's hand more tightly and ran along with him, slipping and stumbling. They were out of the glow of light cast by the lamp they had lighted—light that gleamed from the open door of the van. "I don't like it so dark," said Janet.

"It won't be dark very long," said Dick, bravely and hopefully. "The moon is coming up—look!"

He pointed off through the trees to where a silver glow showed. It was the full moon coming up.

"Oh, I like moonlight," said Janet, and she was no longer afraid.

Behind them there suddenly burst out the loud voices of men—and it seemed that they were surprised about something.

"Maybe they have looked in the wagon and they don't see us," suggested Janet. "Maybe they're mad 'cause we ran away."

"Maybe," agreed Dick. "Let's run faster!"

They were in a more open part of the road now, and the moon gave a very good light so they could see to run better. On they hurried through the woods, leaving behind them the

Gipsy van. The shouts only sounded faintly now.

"We'll soon be home," said Dick to his sister.

"I—I guess mother and daddy and grandma will be worried," said Janet.

"I guess they will," spoke Dick. "But we couldn't help it. We didn't mean to get shut up in the Gipsy wagon."

"What you s'pose made 'em open the door if they didn't want us to get out?" asked Janet.

"I don't know," her brother said. "Maybe the door flew open by itself, same as it slammed shut."

"Maybe," murmured Janet.

They hurried along under the green trees of the forest—trees that were now turned to silver by the bright moon.

Suddenly Janet gave such a start that she nearly pulled her hand from Dick's warm grasp.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Did you—did you hear that noise?" whispered his sister. "Listen, Dick!"

To the ears of the children came a low, growling sound.

CHAPTER XV

FOUND AT LAST

JANET would have turned and run back through the woods, toward the Gipsy wagon, but Dick held her firmly by the hand.

"Don't be scared," he said.

"But that growl, Dick! Maybe it's a bear!"

"Pooh! There aren't any bears here, I told you!" he said. "It's only a dog—or something."

Janet's heart was wildly beating and, even though Dick had told his sister not to be frightened he was feeling a bit that way himself. Anxiously the little girl and boy stared ahead at the road that stretched before them winding through the woods. It showed brightly and plainly in the moonlight.

Suddenly some animal darted out of the underbrush, paused for a moment to look at the children and then ran on again, more swiftly than at first.

"Oh, Dick! Look!" murmured Janet.

"Yes, it's nothing but a fox!" said the boy. "I thought it was only a fox or a dog. That's nothing to be scared of. Come on."

"Won't the fox jump out at us?" asked Janet.

"Course not," declared Dick. "Come on!"

Once more they kept on through the woods, along the old road. This road did not seem to be traveled much, for grass grew in the middle and the ruts where the wagon wheels rolled were filled with deep holes in some places and made bumpy by high stones in other spots.

"Do you think this road will take us home?" asked Janet after a while.

"Sure it will," said Dick, though how he could be so certain he did not tell.

The moon was now well up in the sky, giving a fine light, and the children could see very plainly. It was not half so scary being in a moon-glowing woods like this as it would have been in a dark, gloomy forest.

Suddenly, as Dick and Janet made a turn in the old road, they saw shining at them, a little way off, two bright spots of light. The spots of light flickered and gleamed.

"Look! Look!" whispered Janet. "Are those the eyes of the fox?"

"No. They're too big for the eyes of the fox," answered Dick. He and Janet had often seen the eyes of their cat glisten in the dark when a light reflected on them, but they had never seen such big gleams as these from the eyes of any pussy.

"Maybe—maybe it's a bear," whispered the little girl. She pressed closer to her brother.

"There aren't any bears here, I tell you!" said Dick.

The spots of light became bigger and brighter. They drew nearer, coming along the road. And then Dick gave a cry:

"It's an automobile!" he shouted. "It's an auto, Janet, and maybe they'll give us a ride home!"

"Oh, goodie!" exclaimed Janet.

Nearer came the lights. Now the children stood still plainly showing in the gleam of the auto headlights. And then a welcome voice cried:

"Dick! Janet!"

"Oh, it's daddy! It's daddy!" shouted the children.

A moment later they were in their father's arms, and Janet could not help crying a little because she was so glad.

"Well, we found you; didn't we?" asked Jerry as he walked up beside Mr. Cherry, leaving the throbbing auto a little distance down the road, its headlights brightly gleaming, like some animal's eyes.

"Did you come after us?" asked Dick.

"Of course we did," said his father. "But where in the world have you been?"

"In the Gipsy wagon," Dick replied.

"Did you follow it off through the woods?" Jerry wanted to know.

"We went inside to see what it looked like," explained Dick. "Then we got in the little beds and we fell asleep. And somebody came and hitched a horse to the wagon and drove off."

"And they locked us in," added Janet, "so we couldn't get out."

"Well, how did you get out now?" his father inquired.

"The wagon bumped over a big stone, I guess," Dick explained, "and the door opened."

"Then we went out," and Janet took up the

story, "but we had something to eat before that, and Dick lighted the lamp and there was a lot of men talking loud."

"Where is the Gipsy wagon now?" asked Mr. Cherry.

"Back there," and Dick pointed to the road behind them.

"Is Kobah there?" inquired Zut, who had ridden with Mr. Cherry and Jerry as a guide through the woods.

"Who is Kobah?" asked Dick.

"He owns the Gipsy wagon you rode in," explained Mr. Cherry.

"We didn't see anybody," remarked Dick, "and we couldn't make anybody hear. But we pounded and kicked and—"

"We hollered, too," broke in Janet.

"Kobah—he very deaf—like a dead tree," said Zut, slowly.

"Well, I'm glad I have you two little tykes back," spoke Mr. Cherry. "And while we are at it I suppose we may as well ride on a little way and tell Kobah what happened. I guess he will be surprised to find that you have made a meal in his wagon."

"And we slept in his beds, too," said Dick.

"But I thought you could pay him if he wanted money."

"Yes," laughed his father. "We'll see about that. But we must hurry home so mother and grandma won't worry. You shouldn't have gotten in the wagon, children. We didn't know where you were."

"We didn't know, either," and Janet laughed in a happy care-free manner.

It was only a short ride in the auto to where the Gipsy wagon still stood. One of the wheels had gone down in a deep rut which had caused the heavy jolt. And the shouting and loud voices was caused when Kobah saw some of his Gipsy friends who were coming to meet him.

Kobah had been much surprised to see the lamp lighted in his wagon which he had supposed was empty. He and his Gipsy friends looked in, after the door flew open and Dick and Janet slipped out. The Gipsies saw the remains of the children's meal, and also noticed the tumbled beds and they did not know what to think.

Mr. Cherry, and those with him in the auto, found some puzzled Gipsies gathered about the red wagon. There was some rapid talk—loud

talk to make deaf Kobah hear—and then Zut explained matters.

Kobah had planned to go on a visit in his traveling wagon to some other Gipsy tribe. He left his wagon off by itself in the woods where Dick and Janet came upon it while they were looking for a good place to hide. What happened to the children I have told you.

"But Kobah he not know any children in his wagon," explained Zut to whom the Gipsy talked in his own tongue. "He not know they are there at all. He not lock door, either. Door he slam shut all by himself and he lock—catch on outside you know."

"Yes, I guess it could happen that way," agreed Mr. Cherry.

"Then wagon—he go bimp-bump," went on Zut, "and door he fly open. Kobah see light come out back door no can tell what make do. So he holler and other Gipsies come to meet him. Nobody in wagon when they look—no can tell what do."

"Yes, I reckon it was a puzzle," chuckled Jerry. "Two Wild Cherries all right!" and he looked at Janet and Dick, who were almost falling asleep on the rear seat of the auto.

"Everything all right now," went on Zut. "Kobah he say him sorry children get scared—he never hurt children—he love 'em! He say all right about crackers and what they eat."

"Well, give him this," and Mr. Cherry handed Zut a dollar to give the old Gipsy who grinned his delight and muttered something in his own language.

"And now for home!" cried the father of Janet and Dick. "I am afraid mother and grandma will be very much worried. I would telephone them that you're all right, if I could find a place. Don't ever do anything like this again, children."

"No, sir, we won't!" promised the two Wild Cherries.

Leaving Kobah and his friends to get the wagon out of the rut, it was only a short run back to the Gipsy camp where Zut was left, and Madame Deborah smiled a white-teeth welcome to the children who could hardly keep their eyes open.

"I am glad you are found," she said. "I felt you would be. But you shall have many more adventures yet."

"I think they will," chuckled Mr. Cherry.

"Bed will be their next stopping place," said Jerry.

Quickly the automobile made the trip from the cranberry bog back to the Cherry home.

"Oh, you little rascals!" said their mother, as she kissed Dick and Janet.

"Poor dears!" murmured Grandma Cherry. "Wild Cherries in very truth!"

"We didn't—now we didn't find your cameo pin, Grandma," murmured Janet.

"Oh, don't think any more about it," advised the old lady. "We were so worried about you!"

Then Dick and his sister were hurried up to bed.

You can well imagine how the boy and girl playmates flocked about the two Wild Cherries next day to hear all about their adventure. For the news had spread how Janet and Dick had ridden off in the Gipsy wagon.

One story was that the two children had been kidnapped by the dark-skinned people, Janet to be taken away to be a Gipsy Queen while Dick was to be made a King when he grew up.

Of course such stories were silly, but some people believed them, and Ted Wharton, who

was a great reader of fairy books, was quite disappointed when he learned Dick and Janet had come back safe and sound.

"The Gipsies are real nice," said Janet, telling her share in the story. "I like that old Kobah."

"If he hadn't been so deaf he could have heard us knocking and hollering," spoke Dick, "and then he would have let us out."

"I'd like to ride off in a Gipsy wagon," murmured Henry Merton.

"So would I!" agreed Jim Blake and Sam Ward.

And then Dick and Janet had to go into more details about their strange trip.

Happy days of vacation time followed each other swiftly for the Cherry children and their chums. They played in the woods and fields. Then came almost a week of rain when they could not go out of doors. But Dick and Janet had fun in the house or barn. Sometimes Grandma Cherry told them wonderful stories.

At last the rain stopped and the sun smiled warm and bright once more. Out of doors rushed the little boy and girl.

"Oh, look how big the duck pond is!" cried Janet. "It's like a lake!"

Dick gazed at it a moment and then he had one of his sudden ideas.

"Come on, Janet!" he cried. "I know something wonderful we can do! Just wonderful!"

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE RAFT

JANET followed Dick around the edge of the duck pond which held more water, on account of the rain, than had been in it for many months. The brook running into the pond was now like a little river.

"Where you going?" Janet asked.

"Come on—I'll show you! Oh, this is going to be wonderful!" cried her brother.

At one end of the duck pond, farthest from the house, was a pile of fence rails, old boxes and other wood that Jerry cut up for kindling from time to time. He had not done any cutting for several weeks and there was much wood in the pile—including some boxes that Mr. Cherry had sent down from the hardware store.

"Help me get out some of the big pieces of wood, Janet," directed Dick.

"What you going to do?" she wanted to

know. "Are you going to make a house?"

"I'm going to make a raft, and we're going sailing on the duck pond," Dick answered. "It'll be lots of fun!"

"What's a raft?" Janet wanted to know as she helped her brother pull out some long pieces of wood.

"It's like a boat," explained Dick, "only it's flat. You put it in the water and ride on it. We'll put some boxes on our raft and make believe they're a cabin on a big ship and we'll go sailing and land on a desert island and play Robinson Crusoe!"

Dick was almost out of breath when he finished, partly from talking so fast and partly from pulling on the boards, and long, thin pieces of wood, to get them loose from the pile.

"Can I ride on the raft?" Janet wanted to know.

"Sure you can—we'll both ride. Now help me pull out this long pole."

"What's that for?" the little girl inquired. "Are we going to put up a clothes line on the desert island, and is this a clothes pole?"

"No, it's a pole so we can push the raft around in the duck pond," Dick answered.

"Maybe I can put up a sail on it—I don't know —but, anyhow, we can push it around with a pole."

"I know what would make a good sail," spoke Janet.

"What?" asked Dick.

"An umbrella. You could open it and hold it out and the wind would blow on it and sail the raft. Once I had an umbrella and the wind blew it out of my hands," said Janet.

"Oh, yes! I remember!" laughed Dick. "An umbrella will make a good sail."

"But first we got to make the raft," decided Janet, wisely enough.

"That's right!" agreed her brother. "I got to get a hammer and some nails and some pieces of rope, like clothes line, to fasten the raft together. You go get the line and I'll get the hammer and nails."

A little later Jane, who was cooking in the kitchen, heard Janet asking her:

"Please, Jane, where's the clothes line?"

"Oh, you don't want the big clothes line to hang up your doll's washed things on," objected Jane with a laugh, "I'll give you a piece of string."

"I'm not going to hang up doll clothes," remarked Janet.

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Dick wants the line for something. Where is it, please?"

"Down in the laundry. But Dick had better not try to play Wild West and lasso you like he did once. He might hurt you. You two Cherries are wild enough without playing cowboy."

"We aren't going to play cowboy," Janet answered, as she started for the laundry.

"What are you going to play?" asked Jane, for Mrs. Cherry had gone out with Grandma, and the cook felt she must look after the children. But before Janet could tell about the raft, Jane smelled something burning in the oven of the stove.

"Oh, my cake!" she cried, and she was so excited about this that she gave no further thought to Janet who went to the laundry and got the clothes line.

Meanwhile Dick had found a box of nails and a hammer in the combined barn and garage where Jerry kept them, and when Janet returned to her brother with the rope, she found

him nailing some boards on some long pieces of wood.

"Here's the rope," remarked Janet, who was trailing it on the ground after her, like a long, thin tail.

"Thanks," spoke Dick, who was almost too busy to look up. "Now you tie some of these boards to the long cross pieces, and leave enough of the rope for an anchor."

"Where we going to anchor?" asked Janet as she began her share of the work.

"We're going to anchor on the desert island," answered her brother.

"Oh," murmured the little girl. "Will there be anything to eat on the desert island—any bananas or oranges or cocoanuts?"

"Maybe," Dick replied, "and maybe not, I guess we better take something with us."

"I'll get some cookies from Jane," offered Janet. "They're not as good as Grandma's, but we can eat 'em I guess. You better tie the rope on, Dick, 'cause you can do it better'n what I can."

"All right," the little boy said. "Ouch!" he suddenly cried.

"What's the matter?" asked Janet.

"I hit my thumb with the hammer."

"What for?"

"Well, I didn't do it for *fun!*" mumbled Dick for he had his thumb in his mouth now. "I bumpmp—boo—hubt—bub—be—bail."

"Oh, you mean you went to hit the nail?" and Janet tried not to laugh at Dick's funny talk when his mouth was more than half filled by his injured thumb.

"Um," he murmured. Then as, like little Jack Horner he took out his thumb, he said: "Go on get the cookies. I'll finish the raft."

Jane had been so quick in taking her cake out of the oven that it had only burned the least bit—not enough to harm it—and she was feeling good-natured when Janet again entered the kitchen.

"Well, what is it now, little Wild Cherry?" asked Jane, smiling.

"Please may Dick and I have something to eat?" begged Janet. "I don't mean something to eat *here,*" she added. "We want to take our lunch out in a box or basket."

"Oh, and go off in the woods and hide in a Gipsy wagon again, and be lost and worry your

poor mother and grandma to fits, I s'pose!" exclaimed Jane. "No, I can't let you do that. Your mother wouldn't like it."

"Oh, please Jane, we aren't going to the *woods* at all!" promised Janet. "We're only down by the duck pond."

"Well, there's a lot of extra water in the duck pond—be careful you don't fall in," warned the good-natured cook.

"Oh, no'm, we won't," promised Janet. But she little knew what was going to happen. "And, please, could we have some lunch?" she asked.

"Oh, I s'pose so," answered Jane. And she was so pleased that her cake—a new kind she had tried for the first time—wasn't burned, that she put up an extra big and good lunch for the children.

"Now don't you play in the water and get wet," Jane warned Janet as the little girl hurried off to join her brother on the bank of the duck pond.

"All right," Janet said. She didn't really mean to get wet—but I haven't come to that part yet.

"I got lots of good things to eat!" Janet told Dick, who was still busy nailing and tying together the raft.

"That's fine!" cried Dick. "We'll go sailing pretty soon."

"Oh, I forgot the umbrella for a sail!" exclaimed Janet. "I'll go get it," she offered. "Here, you go on away!" she ordered, for some of the ducks were swimming up toward the basket of lunch she had set down on the bank. Janet tossed little pebbles at the ducks, not to hit them, but to make them swim away, which they did. Back to the house she ran.

"Well, what is it now?" called Jane who heard her enter.

"I just want to get the old umbrella, Jane," answered the little girl.

"Yes, it will keep the sun off you, and I s'pose you want to pretend it's a circus tent," laughed the cook. "Well, be careful, that's all I ask of you. If anything happens your mother will blame me."

"We'll be careful," promised Janet, and really she meant to—but when the raft—

Oh, I forgot—I can't tell you about that just yet.

Clasping the umbrella under her arm, Janet hurried back to where Dick waited for her.

"It's 'most finished," said the boy, pointing to the raft. "I just got to put in a few more nails and tie on some more rope and we'll start sailing."

"I'll help," offered Janet, and she did, aiding Dick to carry from the wood pile several empty packing boxes which were put on the raft. On these boxes the children could stand, or sit, and thus keep their feet out of the water—for the raft was not as dry as a boat would have been.

"All aboard! Now we'll go!" cried Dick as he drove in the last nail.

"You can't sail on dry land!" laughed Janet. "The raft isn't in the water yet."

"I know it," Dick answered, taking up a pole and putting it under the edge of the raft which was just at the edge of the duck pond. "We got to shove it into the water. Come on—help!"

Janet added her weight to the pole, and after some hard work the children managed to thrust the raft off the shore and into the big pond, so that it floated nicely.

"Oh, it's just like a real boat; isn't it?" cried Janet in delight.

"Sure!" assented Dick. "All aboard!"

He and his sister scrambled upon the raft which tipped a little, as both their weights came on one edge.

"Oh, I'm getting my feet wet!" screamed Janet.

"Get in the middle and sit on a box, or else take off your shoes and stockings!" directed Dick. "That's what I'm going to do."

Janet went to the middle of the raft and there she found it dry enough. Only a little water came up through the cracks between the boards, but by sitting on a box Janet's feet were lifted out of the dampness.

Dick was about to push the raft off from shore, using a long pole when Janet gave a sudden cry.

"What's the matter?" her brother wanted to know.

"We forgot the lunch basket!" gasped Janet, pointing to shore.

"Hu!" grunted the boy. "Well, I'll get it."

Quickly taking off his shoes and stockings he waded back to shore and brought off the basket

He thrust hard on the pole and the raft floated out from shore.

of good things to eat. But he had no sooner set foot on the raft, and was again about to push off than Janet cried:

"Oh—look—the umbrella! I forgot that."

"Say!" began Dick, and then he laughed. It was too lovely a day, and there was so much fun ahead that, really, he couldn't be cross. "I'll get it," he offered and once more he waded to shore.

"Now I guess we got everything," remarked the little boy as, again, he stepped on the raft. "Now we'll go to the desert island and have fun."

"I don't see any island," spoke Janet, looking across the wide duck pond.

"We can sail down the brook and maybe there'll be an island there 'cause the water's so high," said Dick. "All aboard! Toot! Toot! Here we go!"

He thrust hard on the pole and the raft floated out from shore.

"Don't lean over and fall in," he told Janet, " 'cause it's deep out in the middle."

Before Janet could reply, a loud shout near the Cherry barn came to the ears of her and her brother. Looking back, they saw several

boys running toward them, shouting and waving their hands.

"I wonder what's the matter?" asked Janet, as Dick stopped pushing and let the raft slowly float along. "What do they want, Dick—those boys?"

CHAPTER XVII

"IT'S A WHALE"

THE boys—there were four of them—came to a sudden stop at the edge of the pond. Dick knew them all—Tom Wade, Jim Nelson, Henry Miller and Sid Altman. They were boys who were older than Dick and Dick's special chums.

"Hello, Dick! greeted Tom Wade. "What 'chu doin'?" Tom did not always trouble himself to say all his words correctly.

"I'm sailing a raft," answered Dick.

"Give us a ride!" suggested Jim Nelson. It was more of an order than a polite request.

"Yes, take us on board," urged Henry Miller.

"We'll row the raft and you and your sister can ride," added Sid Altman.

"Don't you do it, Dick," begged Janet in a low voice. "They'll upset us or something."

"I know they will," replied Dick, also in a low voice. "I'm not going to let 'em come on here."

He slowly pushed the raft farther out from shore. Seeing this the four lads cried in a chorus:

"Aw, come back and give us a ride!"

"No," and Dick shook his head firmly. "This raft will only hold two. If all you fellows come on it'll sink!"

"Pooh! You can't sink a raft!" declared Sid.

"Well, you can make it tip over," replied Dick. "And we don't want to get wet."

"I guess he isn't going to let us ride," said Tom to his three rather rough chums. "Come on, let's make a raft of our own."

"Too much work," decided Jim, who was somewhat lazy.

"Hi there!" called Henry Miller. "If you don't come back and give us a ride, Dick, we'll do something!" This sounded like a threat, but Dick was not afraid. He was far enough out in the water now so that the boys could not reach him. He thought they would not dare throw stones at him.

"What'll you do?" asked Dick, as he and Janet poled their craft still farther away.

"We'll make a raft and we'll ram you! We'll turn pirates!" threatened Henry, "and sink you!"

"Oh! If they do that!" gasped Janet.

"Pooh, don't be afraid," said her brother in a low voice. "It will take 'em a long time to make a raft, and we'll be done playing by then. I'm not scared of 'em!" Then, to the four lads on shore he called: "Go on! Make a raft if you want to! I don't care!"

"Come on! Let's get some planks and go after 'em!" proposed Sid.

"All right," agreed Henry. "That Dick thinks he's too smart, anyhow. We'll have some fun with him!"

The four turned and walked back along the edge of the pond. The raft, with Dick and Janet on it floated slowly around a bend in the shore, and the two Wild Cherries lost sight of their tormentors.

"Now we're all right," said Dick. "We can have some fun. We'll go to that desert island and have a picnic."

"What do you s'pose those boys will do?" asked his sister, a little anxiously.

"Oh, they won't do anything," he declared. "They're only talking. They can't find enough boards to make a raft."

"I hope they don't," murmured Janet. "Oh, this is lots of fun," she went on, as she walked about on the raft, and looked at the ripples it made in the sunlit water of the pond. "It's just like a real boat!"

"Yes, but keep in the middle if you don't want it to upset!" suddenly yelled Dick, for his sister had gone to one side and the raft tilted.

"Oh! My feet are getting wet some more!" cried Janet.

"Well, keep in the middle then," warned Dick.

By doing this the raft rode along on what a sailor would call "an even keel," not tipping too much to either side. Slowly Dick and Janet poled themselves down stream. Looking back they saw no signs of the four boys and they hoped the quartette had gone away.

"I guess it's 'most time to eat now," said Dick, after a while.

"But we aren't at the desert island yet," objected Janet.

"That doesn't matter," laughed her brother.

"We can eat now and eat again when we get to the desert island—that is if we find one. Maybe we won't find any island, and so we'd better eat now, anyhow."

"All right," agreed the little girl. She was almost as hungry as was her brother, and just as ready to open the lunch basket.

So, while the raft idly floated along the pond, and into a little stream which ran from it, the children sat on a box, dangling in the water their bare feet, and eating the lunch Jane had given them.

"This is fun; isn't it?" asked Dick.

"Lots of fun!" echoed his sister. "Let's do it every day."

"Sure we will!" Dick agreed. "But maybe Jane wouldn't give us something to eat every day."

"Oh, I guess she would," spoke Janet, more hopefully.

"Well, let's don't eat it all now," suggested Dick. "Save some until we get to the desert island. I've had enough now."

"So've I," Janet remarked, and the lunch basket was put away.

Taking the poles, the children once more sent

the raft along a little more rapidly than the sluggish current would have taken it. They went around another bend and then Dick cried:

"There's an island!"

"Oh, so it is!" assented Janet. "It's a lovely, desert island! We can land there and have a picnic!"

To tell the truth it was not much of an island —merely some humps of green grass growing in the middle of the stream which flowed out of the pond. It was about as large as two washtubs—hardly room enough for Janet and Dick on it at the same time. But to the Wild Cherries it was a real, desert island.

"We'll make believe orange and banana and cocoanut trees are growing on it," suggested Janet, as the raft slowly drifted toward it.

"And monkeys, too," added Dick.

"Monkeys don't grow on trees!" scoffed Janet.

"I know they don't," said Dick. "But they live in cocoanut trees, and if there's cocoanut trees on that desert island there's got to be monkeys."

"Oh, all right," assented Janet. "I don't

mind. Only I hope the monkeys in the cocoanut trees don't throw any nuts down on us."

"If they'd throw bananas it would be all right!" laughed her brother. "Bananas are soft!"

They poled the raft up to the edge of the island and "went ashore," as a sailor would say. It was quite a tight squeeze for both of them to land, and when they did they found the ground of the island rather damp, like a sponge, with water oozing up at each step they took.

"Anyhow it's lots of fun!" laughed Janet. "Now we can eat some more and pretend we're shipwrecked sailors."

"We're having a good time," said Dick.

Taking a box from the raft, Dick placed it in the middle of the island for him and his sister to sit on, as it was too damp to use the ground. The grass grew long and green because of the moisture. Seated thus Dick and his sister ate the remainder of the lunch they had brought with them. It did not take long, for they had eaten the greater part of the food while poling down the pond.

"Well, let's get back on the raft and ride

some more," suggested Janet after a while.

"That's right," agreed her brother. "You couldn't even play tag here."

"Not without falling off into the water," and Janet laughed again.

Once more they were on the raft, slowly moving out and away from the little green island. The queer boat tilted from side to side as Janet or Dick moved about on it.

"I'm tired of pushing," Janet remarked a little later. "Let's rest a bit."

"All right," assented her brother, and he laid his pole down on the raft near where Janet had dropped hers. The two Wild Cherries stood on their home-made craft, looking about them. The stream flowing from the pond was wider at this point, so that it was a good ten feet to either shore, though the water was not very deep.

Slowly the raft drifted along, and then it came to a stop. Dick was thinking of suggesting that they start and pole back toward home when he and Janet suddenly noticed that the raft was moving all by itself. And the strange part of it was that it was moving up stream,

and against the current; not floating down as it had been.

It would not have been surprising had the raft drifted down stream. That would have been natural. But now some strange and unseen force seemed taking the raft, and the children on it, up along the brook.

"Look!" cried Janet. "We're moving and we're not pushing!"

Neither she nor her brother had taken up their pushing poles.

"I wonder what makes us go?" mused Dick.

Janet looked toward the bow, or front part, of the raft, if the raft can be said to have a bow. She saw, stretching down into the water, part of one of the ropes that she and her brother had used to tie together the pieces of boards. And this rope was stretched out in the water, straight and taut, like a fishline with a fish fast to it pulling to get off the hook.

"Oh, Dick! Look!" cried Janet. "Something is pulling us!"

"I guess it is," Dick said. "Something under the water has got hold of one of the dangling ropes and is giving us a tow."

"Oh!" screamed Janet. "I'm afraid!"

"What you scared of?" Dick wanted to know.

"It's a whale! I'm sure it's a whale pulling us!" cried Janet. "Oh, Dick!"

"There aren't any whales in here!" Dick declared.

"Well, what is it then?" his sister wanted to know. "Something has hold of us and it's pulling us and maybe it's a whale!"

"No!" shouted Dick. "I know what it is! Some of those fellows—Tom Wade or Jim Nelson are playing a trick on us! They've got hold of the rope and they're pulling us back!"

"How could they do it under water?" Janet wanted to know. "Oh, it must be a whale, Dick, or some big fish!"

Dick was about to answer but just then, all of a sudden, the raft which was now moving rather swiftly, struck a hidden rock in the stream. Janet was standing near the edge of the raft.

In another instant she lost her balance and toppled over into the water with a splash and a wild cry of:

"Dick! Oh, Dick! I'm overboard!"

CHAPTER XVIII

RUNAWAY ROLLERS

Dick Cherry was a quick, active little fellow for his age. He was good at playing all sorts of games where one had to think in a hurry. And that is what Dick did now—when he saw his sister falling off the raft.

"I'll get you! I'll get you!" he shouted.

Then he leaped into the water at the point where Janet had fallen overboard. But Dick leaped in feet first and Janet had fallen in head first—that was the difference. Janet's head, nose, eyes and mouth, going under water, stopped her breathing for a moment.

But Dick landed right side up, so to speak, and found the water no more than over his knees. It was really hardly deep enough to swim in, and Janet would have been in no trouble had she, like Dick, gone in feet first.

As it was, however, she was on one side, kicking, squirming, struggling and gasping for

breath in the shallow water. She happened to remember what her father had told her to do in case she ever did fall into the pond or brook:

"Hold your breath! Don't try to breathe, or the water will come in your nose and mouth and you will choke."

Janet did not think of this quite in time. But after the first gasp, when she found the choking water entering her nose and mouth, she shut her teeth firmly together and said to herself:

"I mustn't breathe! I mustn't breathe!"

And she didn't—any more—but she had already swallowed some water which made her choke and gasp.

Dick reached down and caught hold of the back of Janet's dress. Thus he was able to lift her up and out of the water. And as soon as Janet's face was free from the water she could breathe again.

"Oh, Dick! Dick!" she gasped, still half choking! "I fell—I fell in the water! Don't let the big fish get me!"

"There isn't any big fish!" declared Dick. But, even as he looked he saw his raft being towed up stream by something. And he knew it could not be one of the four boys who had

asked to ride on the raft. They could not have remained under water that long, nor was the stream at this point deep enough to hide them.

"You're all right now, Janet! You're all right!" said Dick, as he wiped away some of the water from his sister's face. "You're not drowned!"

"I know I'm not drowned!" she gasped in reply. "Course not! But I'm all—now I'm all WET!"

And so she was—there was no getting away from that. She was much wetter than Dick, who was only splashed up to his waist.

"I'll help you to shore and we can get dry," said Dick. "The sun is good and warm and we'll soon dry."

"I don't want to go home all wet!" said Janet. "Mother wouldn't like it, nor Grandma, either, 'specially after I lost her cameo pin. She'll say we're always doing something."

And it was true—the Wild Cherries were always doing something.

"Look at the raft, Dick! It's running away some more!" exclaimed Janet, pointing to the logs and boards which were still moving up the stream, with that rope stretched out in front

so straight. Surely something under water had hold of it.

"I wonder what it is? murmured Janet, who had gotten over her choking and gasping spell. "It's a big fish, I'm sure!"

At that moment the raft struck another low rock in the stream, and the craft swung to one side. As it did so something round and black, that was fastened to the tow rope, seemed to swim into the view of the children.

"Oh, it's a big turtle!" cried Janet. "A snapping turtle! Don't let it bite me, Dick!" and she splashed her way toward the shore.

"Yes, it is a turtle, and I guess it's a snapper, too," said Dick, as he saw the big water-reptile swimming away. "It's a snapper and it got caught in one of the ropes. That's what was swimming off with our raft. It wasn't a whale, Janet."

"Well, it was almost like a whale, only, maybe, not so big," said the little girl who had, by this time, reached shore. "What you s'pose made him take our raft, Dick?"

"I don't guess he did it on purpose," replied Dick. "I guess the snapper was swimming along and he got tangled up in the dangling

rope and he couldn't get loose and so he towed us along. He's big and strong."

Indeed it was a very large snapping turtle which had "fouled the towline" as a sailor might say.

Dick and Janet had heard there were snapping turtles in the pond and brook, but never before had seen such a large one. They had often noticed small mud turtles in the water, and box tortoises on land, but none of them was as large as this snapper, which was almost the size of a small washtub, measuring across the crinkled shell on his back.

"I'd like to catch him!" murmured Dick, as he saw the snapper swimming away, doubtless glad to be free of the rope.

"Don't you go after him!" cried Janet as she saw her brother make a move toward the swimming reptile. "He might bite you!"

"If I could get him maybe I could sell him for a dollar," went on Dick.

"Well, you got to help me get dry in the sun, and you got to get dry yourself," declared Janet, "else Mother and Grandma will think we are terrible and—look at the raft—it's floating away!

There was, indeed, enough for Dick to look after without trying to capture the turtle; no easy thing to do. So, letting the creature disappear in the mud and water of the stream, Dick went after the raft which, as it was no longer being towed by the turtle, was floating down stream again.

Dick got on the raft and poled to shore where Janet awaited him. Both children were quite wet, but they did not mind this, for the day was warm and sunny. Fastening the raft to shore, Dick and Janet wrung as much water as they could from their garments, and then sat in the sunshine until they were pretty well dried.

"Now we can go home," suggested Dick.

"I guess mother'll know that I fell in," said Janet. "Don't I sort of look so?" and she tried to smooth out her crumpled dress.

"Yes, you do look mussed up," admitted her brother. "But don't you care! I look just as mussed."

"Oh, for the land sakes! What have you two Wild Cherries been up to now?" cried Grandma Cherry when she saw Janet and Dick coming toward the house a little later.

"We had—now—we had an adventure," answered Dick.

"And I fell in," added Janet, anxious to get the worst over with as soon as possible.

"Oh, dear me!" cried Grandma. "Are you hurt?"

"Thank you, no," Janet answered, and then the story was told.

It was of little use for Mother Cherry to say "don't do it again," so she didn't. Janet and Dick would have been certain to promise not to, but if they didn't go rafting and fall in they would do something else, their mother felt sure.

"You were a clever boy, Dick, to get Janet out as quickly as you did," his mother said, and Dick felt a little proud of himself.

No harm resulted from the raft adventure, but thereafter Dick and his sister were not permitted to do more than paddle a little distance from the shore on the ramshackle craft.

Happy days of summer came and went, and the two Wild Cherries had many good times by themselves and with their playmates. One afternoon, when Janet had gone down street to play at having a dolls' party with Lulu Wil-

son and Sadie Clark, Dick got out his roller skates.

"Do you want anything from the store, Mother?" he called as he banged his way out of the front gate.

"You might bring me three pounds of granulated sugar," she answered. "And be careful not to spill it."

"No'm, I won't!" answered Dick.

Down the street he went whistling, and clanging on his rollers, which he had newly oiled so that they ran smoothly. Dick was looking for some of his chums, but saw none of them.

Dick always liked some of the boys to go to the store with him. He said he could go twice as fast as when he went alone. Whether this is true, or not, I don't know. Certainly two boys can look at things more quickly than one —things along the street I mean, like a monkey with an organ grinder, or a dog chasing a cat. But, on the other hand, two boys can see more than one boy can see to stop and look at. So I guess it's about even.

At any rate Dick saw none of his chums, and so he reached the grocery all alone, which

was unusual for him. He skated in—most of the boys and girls of Vernon who had roller skates, kept them right on when they went to the stores, gliding in on the wheels.

They were not allowed to wear their skates inside the public library, nor to the moving picture theatre, but none of the storekeepers seemed to mind.

"Three pounds of granulated sugar, please," ordered Dick of the clerk, and when it had been put in a bag he tucked it under his arm and skated out of the store.

Now, as it happened, the grocery store was on a street that ran down hill—that is it ran down hill one way and up hill the other way. It happened to be down hill for Dick as he was coming out. Usually he gave himself a good start at the door of the store and he could glide on his skates to the corner, some distance away.

This time something happened. It may have been because Dick had newly oiled the roller skates that they glided so smoothly and so fast. At any rate he found himself gliding down the hilly sidewalk very rapidly.

"Guess I'd better slow up," thought the boy. "I'm a regular runaway!"

But it was easier to think of slowing up than it was to really do it, and Dick found himself gliding faster and faster. In vain he dragged one skate sideways to act as a brake. It slowed him up only a little and still he found himself rushing toward the corner.

"I hope nobody gets in my way!" thought Dick.

It was a vain wish! Just as he reached the corner, going at almost full speed, a man came around the building from the opposite direction —a dark-complexioned man with gold rings in his ears.

Into this man Dick bumped—a banging collision which threw Dick backward and also the man. Dick had a momentary glimpse of him —it was Kobah the Gipsy driver of the red wagon.

"Oh!" gasped Dick.

"Um!" grunted the Gipsy.

Then the bag of sugar, which had slipped from beneath Dick's arm, going up in the air like a baseball, came down. It came down on Kobah's head. The bag burst and Dick and the Gipsy were showered with the three pounds of granulated sugar.

CHAPTER XIX

JANET IN A TANGLE

For a few seconds after the collision, caused by the runaway roller skates, neither Dick nor the Gipsy said anything. They sat there on the sidewalk, at the corner, "like two islands," as Dick said later.

"What did you mean—two *islands?*" asked Janet as her brother told the story at home.

"I mean we were surrounded by spilled sugar," laughed Dick. "An island, you know, is some land surrounded by *water*. But the Gipsy man and I were surrounded by sugar. It was all over!" And Dick laughed again as he remembered it.

But though it was easy enough to laugh afterward, it was not so easy to chuckle as he sat there on the sidewalk, somewhat out of breath from the collision and the fall. Kobah looked with his dark eyes at the one wild little Cherry boy.

"What for you do?" asked Kobah, and he gave himself a wiggle and a shake as he felt some grains of sugar inside his shirt.

"I didn't mean to do it," answered Dick and he, also, gave himself a shake and a wiggle. "I guess the sugar's down my back like it is down yours; isn't it?" he asked the Gipsy who was once suspected of having kidnapped the children.

"Much sugar down my back," announced Kobah. Sometimes he could talk fairly good English, it seemed, and again he pretended not to know a word of that tongue. Gipsies were sly folk, Dick thought.

"Yes, it's down my back, too," went on Dick. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do it," he added, apologizing again. "I got going so fast I couldn't stop. And—whew! Mother will give it to me for spilling all that sugar!" he murmured. "No use trying to gather it up, either! It's gone!"

Dick looked at Kobah curiously.

"How is it you aren't deaf any more?" the boy asked. "You couldn't hear me and Janet holler and knock when we were in your wagon. Aren't you deaf any more?"

"Not so much deaf," answered Kobah. "Doctor man fix ears—make hear better."

Whether it was really this, or whether it was that Kobah only pretended to be hard of hearing at times, Dick did not know. Certainly the Gipsy seemed to hear him all right now.

Some boys and girls, and other passers-by, had stopped to look at the scene of the accident. Dick scrambled to his feet, an example quickly followed by the Gipsy. As soon as it was seen that neither of them was hurt, the older folk who had stopped at the scene passed on. But the children lingered.

"Look at the sugar!" murmured a girl. "Oh, jest look at it!"

"He'll get it when he goes home!" added a boy. Perhaps an accident like this had once happened to him and he remembered.

"Too bad—much sugar no good," mumbled the Gipsy. "Maybe I come 'round corner too fast—I no see you!"

"And I didn't see you—not until I bumped into you," ruefully admitted Dick. "Well, I'll have to go back and get more sugar and charge it on the bill. Guess I'd better take off my skates, too," he added.

He gave himself another shake to get rid of more of the tickling grains of sugar that had sifted down his back. Kobah also wiggled for the same purpose. Then the Gipsy spoke, saying:

"I buy sugar for your mother. Maybe she whip you if you come home with broken bag. Kobah part to blame for make sugar spill. I buy!"

Before Dick quite realized what the dark man was doing, the Gipsy had slipped into the store and came out with three more pounds of the sweet stuff, paying for it himself.

"I say—look here—I don't want you to do this!" objected Dick. "It was my own fault for skating when I had a bag of sugar in my hands. Mother would say it was my fault."

"All right," and Kobah grinned in a cheerful fashion. "You take him bag of sugar home—no tell mother any bag broken—all the same."

"Oh, I guess *not!*" cried Dick. "I'll tell mother just how it happened, but I'm afraid she won't like it—you buying this second bag."

"She no can stop me. I got my own money!" chuckled the Gipsy. "But all the same you

tell—better so make it the truth for mother."

"Yes," agreed Dick, and, somewhat in a daze, he accepted the bag which the dark man held out to him. Then the Gipsy, giving himself another shake to get rid of the sugar still tickling him, hurried off up the street.

"Oh, I say!" called Dick after him.

"No come back! You take sugar!" cried Kobah, hardly turning his head.

"No, I didn't mean that," went on the lad. "But did you find my grandmother's cameo pin?"

"No find pin," was the answer. "All gone, I guess. Gone like him first bag sugar!"

"I guess so—all gone like I thought the sugar was," murmured Dick as the Gipsy vanished around the next corner. "But he was very kind to buy this for me. I wonder what mother will say?"

Dick jumped up and down two or three times.

"What you doing that for?" asked Buddy Nestor, the little brother of Mary. "Is you glad you fell down?" Buddy was in the crowd of children that had gathered.

"No, I'm jumping up and down to get the sugar out of my back," laughed Dick. "Most of it's out now, though, I guess."

He took off his rollers, so there would be no further chance of accident and then, carrying the second bag of sugar most carefully, started for home. Already a colony of ants were gathering in the street to take under ground the sweet grains Dick had spilled. It was a great treasure trove for the ants, and I suppose it was talked of in that ant colony for many years after that. Probably they called that season "Big Sugar Year" for many generations thereafter.

"Well, Dick, what's the matter? Why do you wiggle so?" asked his mother, as he reached home, for he was twisting and squirming.

"I got a lot of sugar down my back!" laughed the boy.

"Sugar!" cried Mrs. Cherry. "You don't mean to tell me you have been having a sugar fight with—"

"Oh, no, Mother!" Dick hastened to say, and then he told what had happened.

"Dear me!" murmured Mrs. Cherry when her son had explained it all, even about the

Gipsy and himself being sort of "islands" surrounded by sweet grains. "Something is always happening now-a-days, it seems—just when I wanted everything nice and quiet for Grandma."

"I guess she would have laughed if she could have seen this," chuckled Dick. "I asked the Gipsy man about her pin, but he hadn't seen it."

"No, I don't suppose we'll ever get it back," sighed Mrs. Cherry. "But what is that Gipsy doing around here again?" she asked. "I thought he had gone away."

"I guess they go and come," said Janet. "Gipsies roam all over. Oh, but Dick! You must have looked so funny!" she laughed.

"I felt funny, too," said her brother. "I feel funny yet. It's worse than a lot of sand down my back! I'm going to get it out," and he went up to his room.

"It was kind of Kobah to buy the other bag of sugar," said Mrs. Cherry to her husband, talking of the accident later. "But I think we ought not to let him spend his money on us. Gipsies are poor folk."

"Not as poor as some people think," said Mr.

Cherry. "But when I see Kobah, I'll make him take back what he spent. It was Dick's fault for skating too fast."

So another day came and went, with the two Wild Cherries no tamer than before. Indeed, as Grandma Cherry said, she thought they grew worse, instead of better.

"But I love them!" she said to Daddy and Mother Cherry. "They don't do anything very wrong, even if they do get into trouble now and then."

"Yes, they are pretty good children," said Mother Cherry.

It was about the middle of the next afternoon that Janet called to her mother, asking:

"May I go over to Mary's house?"

"Yes, but come home in time for supper," her mother answered.

"Yes'm, I will," promised Janet. "I'm going to help her gather the eggs."

The Nestors lived not far from the Cherry home, and Mr. Nestor had built a chicken house, keeping a few hens that he might have fresh eggs. Living not exactly in the country, but near enough to know some of the joys of that wonderful region, it was quite a treat to

either Dick or Janet to help gather the Nestor eggs.

"Be careful now!" warned Mrs. Cherry, as Janet ran off with Mary Nestor. "Don't drop any of the eggs!"

And Janet promised that she would not.

It was a trifle early to go about looking for the eggs when the two little girls reached the Nestor home, so Mary proposed that they play with their dolls a while, and to this Janet agreed.

But as the sun sank lower behind the western hills, casting a golden red glow over the trees, Mrs. Nestor called to her daughter:

"Better gather the eggs now, my dear, before it gets too late."

"Yes'm," agreed Mary. "Janet is going to help me."

Carrying the basket between them, Mary and Janet went toward the chicken house, where there were rows of straw-lined box nests in which the chickens were supposed to lay their eggs.

I say "supposed," because often it was found that some hen would "steal her nest"; that is make one for herself in some secret place. In this hidden nest she would lay her eggs, hoping

to get together about a dozen, when she would set on them, warm them through three long weary weeks, and, after that time, hatch out tiny, baby chickens.

So it was the custom of the Nestors to look for these hidden nests, as they wanted eggs more than they wanted baby chickens. And after the girls had taken the eggs from the regular nests in the hen house, there began a sort of hunting game.

"You look over in those bushes," said Mary to Janet, "and I'll look in these. There's a speckled hen been hiding away her eggs and we want to find her."

"Oh, I hope I find her nest and a lot of eggs!" exclaimed Janet.

"I hope you do," added Mary, unselfishly, and she pointed to a tangle of bushes back of the hen house,—for Janet to search in, while Mary, herself, went toward a clump at one end of the big coop.

Janet had helped hunt for hidden nests before this, and she knew how cautiously to part the bushes and look under them, for some snug little hollow on the ground where the hens loved to hide away their treasures.

Suddenly, as Janet looked, she saw a gleam of something white under a big burdock leaf. Carefully she thrust the leaf to one side and there, in a grass-lined hole, she saw a dozen large eggs.

"Oh, I've found a lot!" she called to Mary. A fine lot!"

"That's good!" Mary answered. "I thought maybe that old speckled hen had a nest over there."

"I'll put the eggs in my apron and bring them out" went on Janet. There was no need of caution now, for the hens had wandered in from the vacant lots and were gathering in the chicken yard ready for their last feeding of cracked corn before going to roost.

Janet carefully picked up the eggs—there was just an even dozen of them—and placed them in her apron, holding the lower edge gathered up in her left hand.

Then, with the precious load, she began to back out of the jungle of bushes. But she did not think of the wild strawberry and blackberry vines that were clustered on the ground at her feet.

Before she realized what was happening,

Janet got into a tangle. One toe caught under a strong vine loop and the little girl tripped. She felt herself falling and cried:

"Oh! Oh, dear!"

"What's the matter?" asked Mary. "Is the old hen after you? I'll come and drive her off!"

"No! 'Tisn't that!" Janet replied.

That was all she had time to say for, an instant later, she fell down in the snarl of bushes and vines—she fell down, eggs and all, and she heard the crack of breaking shells.

CHAPTER XX

WILD WEST

Her feet twisted in the running vines, her hair caught in a briar bush, and with a dozen of eggs—many of them broken—in her apron, the whites and yellows slowly oozing messily over her hands, poor Janet was in a sad state.

"What's the matter?" called Mary who had found a hidden nest with a few eggs in, and had placed them safely in the basket with the others. "Oh, Janet, what's the matter?"

"It's—now it's just—TERRIBLE!" gasped Janet, trying to get up, but not being able to do so because her legs were so caught and held in the vines.

Mary set her basket of eggs carefully down on the ground and ran toward the clump of bushes where she had directed Janet to search. She caught a glimpse of her friend—she saw the running whites and yellows of the smashed eggs.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" gasped Mary, three times—just like that. It was all she could say, she was so surprised.

"Isn't it awful?" cried Janet, rolling over on her back so she would be in a better position to arise. "Won't your mother be terrible mad at me for breaking all these eggs?"

Mary did not answer for a moment. Then she softly murmured:

"You poor thing!"

"But won't your mother be mad—I mean angry?" asked Janet, for, even in the midst of her trouble she remembered that her teacher had told her not to say "mad" when one meant "angry."

"Mother won't care," said Mary. "She didn't know those eggs were there so she won't mind 'cause they're broken."

"Oh, but we'll have to tell her!" declared Janet, bravely.

"Yes, I s'pose so," agreed Mary. "Oh, what a mess!" she murmured as she saw Janet's dress and apron covered with sticky whites and yellows, broken bits of shell mingling with the paste.

There was a rustling in the bushes near the

girls, as Janet managed to scramble her way out to a clear place, and a voice gasped:

"Oh!"

"Who was that?" asked Janet sharply as she caught a glimpse of a small boy dashing off through the underbrush.

"I don't know," Mary answered. "It looked like Toddy Blake."

Toddy Blake was Jim Blake's little brother, a wandering small chap who always turned up at the most unexpected times and places. And this time he had reached the place just after Janet broke the dozen eggs. Toddy gave one look at the strange and woeful sight and then dashed over to the Cherry house.

"Oh! Oh!" he gasped as he rushed up on the shady side porch where Mother Cherry and Grandmother Cherry were sewing. "Oh, you ought to see Janet!"

"What's the matter now?" asked Mrs. Cherry. She did not get as excited as did her mother-in-law who cried:

"What has happened? Has the poor child fallen in again?"

"No, but she's all whites and yellows!" went on Toddy. "You ought to see her!"

He was fairly trembling with the excitement of being a bearer of such wonderful news.

"Where is she?" asked Janet's mother.

"Over by Mr. Nestor's hen house," Toddy replied. "Oh, you ought to see her—all whites and yellows and—and—"

But Grandma and Mother Cherry did not wait to hear more. Dropping their sewing, they hastened across the back lots to the Nestor home. About this same time, Mrs. Nestor, wondering why the two little girls were spending so much time gathering the eggs, went out to look for them. She heard the voices of Janet and Mary and, a little later, came upon them as they were slowly walking toward the house, Mary carrying the basket of eggs and Janet holding her dress out away from her, so the eggs would not run down into her shoes.

"Oh, Janet, what happened?" cried Mrs. Nestor.

"You poor child!" murmured Grandma Cherry. And Mrs. Cherry, who with her husband's mother had just then arrived, added:

"Why did you break the eggs, Janet?"

"I didn't mean to," sobbed the little girl, for her spirit was almost as badly broken as were the frail shells. "I—now—I couldn't help it and—"

And then Janet simply gave up trying to be brave, and cried in real earnest, as almost any little girl would have done.

"There, there, my dear," soothed her mother, and, caring nothing for the messy eggs, Mrs. Cherry put her arms around her daughter. There the story was told, in turns by Janet and Mary. The three ladies looked at one another over the heads of the children, wanting to laugh but knowing how wrong it would be. And then Mrs. Nestor said:

"Never mind, Janet. We have enough eggs without those, and the speckled hen will lay plenty others. She is a very busy chicken. Don't cry any more."

"Oh, but I'm so sorry!" sighed Janet, and then as she saw the queer looks on the faces of her mother, her grandmother and Mary's mother, Janet couldn't help laughing at herself.

"Come in the house and clean yourself off," suggested Mrs. Nestor.

"Oh, I'll take her home and do it there," said Mrs. Cherry.

"The poor child is too distressing a sight to lead across the lots where the other children will see her," went on Mrs. Nestor. "You run off home, Toddy," she said to Jim Blake's curious little brother, who had come back, after telling the news, to see what else was going to happen. "Run home, Toddy."

And Toddy, with a last, lingering look at the egg-smeared Janet, ran away murmuring:

"Oh! Oh! Oh! She's like a chicken; Janet's like a chicken! Oh! Oh!"

The worst of the mess washed from her dress and apron, Janet went home with her mother and grandmother.

"I'm not going to hunt any more hens' nests in bushes," she declared. "Never!"

"I wouldn't, either," chuckled Dick. He just couldn't help laughing a little (though he felt sorry for his sister). He could well imagine how she looked.

For several days after the smashing of the eggs, nothing much happened to the two Wild Cherries. They played about the house and yard, now and then wandering away over the

fields and through the woods with their boy and girl friends. It was glorious summer—the time of long, sunshiny days filled with pleasure.

Not far from the Cherry home, down a lane off the main road, lived Nate Feldman, a junkman. He had a ramshackle old wagon, and a bony, slowly-moving horse that seemed more than half asleep all of the time, so sedately did it shuffle along. Mr. Feldman used to buy old papers, old automobile tires, old bottles and old iron. In fact he never bought anything new—just old junk. He was a genial, good-natured man, fond of children and often paid them a few pennies more for the old junk they sold him than any other dealer would have done.

One day Dick, who with his sister, Mary Nestor and Sam Ward was wandering over the lots not far from Feldman's Lane, as it was called—one day Dick had a brilliant idea. It came to him in a flash.

"I know what let's do!" he cried.

"What?" asked Sam, idly tossing a stone over the fence. "Do you mean get out your old raft and go sailing?"

"No, we couldn't all get on the raft," Dick

answered. "It's something better than that."

"Do you mean go to the Gipsy camp in the cranberry bog and take another look for Grandma's pin?" Janet inquired.

"No, that wouldn't do any good," answered Dick. "It's something better than that."

"Say, didn't you ever get that pin back?" Sam Ward wanted to know.

"No, we never did," and Janet sadly shook her head. "I wish I could find it, though," she added.

"I heard that Gipsy was back in town," went on Sam. "You know—that one who took you two off in his wagon—Kobah. Somebody said he brought the pin back."

"No, he didn't," answered Dick. "I ran into him on my rollers, and knocked him down and spilled the sugar. But he said he didn't know anything about the pin."

"Maybe he did, all the same," declared Sam. "Gipsies are queer, my mother says. They can tell what's going to happen. Maybe he knows where the pin is and he's trying to get it to keep for himself."

"I wish if he finds it he'd give it to me so

I could give it back to Grandma," spoke Janet. "She doesn't say much about it, but I know she wants her cameo."

"It would be wonderful if we could find it," declared Mary. "But what were you going to do, Dick? Is it fun?"

"Sure it'll be fun!" exclaimed Dick. "Let's play Wild West!" he proposed.

"How?" asked Sam. "Wild West! What do you mean?"

"We'll get Mr. Feldman's horse and ride him—you and I, Sam. We'll make a lasso of the clothesline and lasso Mary and Janet."

"No you don't—you shan't lasso me!" cried Mary. "The last time you tried you made my neck all red, and you tripped me and I fell in a puddle of water!"

"We can play it out here on the grass where it's nice and dry," suggested Dick. "Then you won't get in any puddles."

"You can lasso me if you want to," offered Janet. She was always ready for any sort of fun like this.

"Come on then!" cried Dick. "I'll lasso Janet but not you, Mary. You can make be-

lieve be an Indian, and they don't lasso Indians, I guess. Anyhow we'll play Wild West."

"Maybe Mr. Feldman won't let you take his horse," suggested Sam.

"Oh, I guess he will," said Dick. "He's let me ride it lots of times, and my father is going to sell him a lot of junk next week, so Mr. Feldman will do as I ask him. Come on, we'll get his horse!"

They walked down the lane, and before they reached the old cabin where the junkman lived they could see that his wagon was in the yard. And where the wagon was the horse would be also, for the two were seldom separated.

"I guess Gasolene is in his stable," remarked Dick. The children called the junk man's horse "Gasolene," or just "Gassy," for short. Of course the animal wasn't at all like gasolene—that is he wasn't quick and lively. So, naturally, the name was only given him in fun. Mr. Feldman called his horse "Old Ironsides," and for a very good reason, as perhaps you can imagine.

"Yes, Gassy is here," went on Dick, as he looked in the stall.

"But Mr. Feldman isn't home—his door is

locked on the outside," reported Janet who had taken a look.

"Oh, well, no matter, we'll take Gassy, anyhow, and play Wild West," decided Dick.

CHAPTER XXI

GASSY RUNS AWAY

Gassy, the junkman's horse, was about as shabby, ill-kept and, altogether, as good-natured as his master. As Dick entered the humble stable, where Gassy lived all by himself, the animal turned his rather sad face around on his long, not overly-thick neck and looked to see who was entering. He whinneyed gently as much as to ask:

"Are you bringing me some oats?"

Gassy hardly ever had oats to chew on—oats were too expensive for a poor junkman to buy for his horse, so Gassy never really got any. But he could not give up expecting them. However he did not make any fuss when he saw that Dick and the other children came in empty handed.

"Hello, Gassy!" greeted Dick, slapping the horse familiarly on the flank. "Come on out and play!" the boy added with a laugh.

"You're going to have some fun!" added Sam.

"Playing Wild West," continued Janet, who was almost as much a boy as was her brother.

"But you can't lasso me!" declared Mary.

"No, I'm not going to," promised Dick.

Gassy was no stranger to the two Wild Cherries and their chums. Mr. Feldman had made friends with the girls and boys by buying of them such junk as they brought him, and, more than once, Dick and Janet had ridden on the back of the old horse after Mr. Feldman had unhitched the animal at the close of a day's journeying. Mary and Sam were not so well acquainted with Old Ironsides, or Gassy, as the children like to call the horse, but they were not utter strangers to him.

"I'll lead him out and then we'll take turns riding on his back," suggested Dick, as he loosed the halter that held Gassy in his stall. Not that the horse would be likely to wander; for usually he was so tired, after dragging the junk wagon about all day, that not even a big fire cracker, exploded right beneath him, would have caused him to run.

But this was a sort of holiday with Gassy.

His master had gone off early in the morning, taking a train to a distant town to see a sister who was ill, so the horse did not have to work. In consequence he was rather spry when Dick led him out of the barn.

"Can't I have a ride?" begged Janet. "I won't fall off."

"Yes, you can have a little ride," her brother promised, "but you can't be a cowboy and ride fast, 'cause Sam and I are going to be cowboys."

"I can be a cowgirl," declared Janet.

"What do you mean—cowgirl?" asked Dick, pausing near the barn door, while Gassy sniffed the fresh air, and, doubtless, wondered what was going on.

"They have cowgirls in the Wild West, 'cause I saw pictures of 'em!" insisted Janet.

"So did I," added Mary.

"Oh, well, maybe there are cowgirls," admitted Dick, "but you girls can't lasso with the clothesline, nor ride fast."

"I don't want to lasso with the clothesline," said Janet, "but I'll ride as fast as a cowgirl—so there!"

"Oh, all right! All right!" agreed Dick,

anxious not to have a fuss before the fun was fairly started. "We'll take turns."

"Where's the lasso?" asked Sam.

"And you haven't got any saddle on the horse," added Mary.

"I don't need any saddle," answered Dick. "Real Wild West cowboys or cowgirls don't need a saddle. But I got to have a lasso. We'll take Mr. Feldman's clothesline," he continued, pointing to one stretched between two posts that seemed about to fall over by their own weight. "I don't want to go all the way back to our house to get a line. You take that one, Sam. We can put it back again after we get through."

While Sam loosened the line from the posts, Dick led Gassy up to a pile of boxes where he intended to mount the animal. Gassy would stand still long enough for this, Dick knew. In fact standing still was one of the best things that Gassy did. He would rather do that than anything else, it seemed.

While the girls watched, Janet eager for her turn, Dick managed to scramble up on the rather bony back of Gassy.

"You haven't got anything to pull on his

Dorothy

mouth with, like the cowboys have in the Wild West," objected Mary.

This was true—there was only a halter on Gassy's head—no bit or bridle.

"Some cowboys ride this way," said Dick calmly, as if he knew all about it. And, as a matter of fact, some cowboys do ride wild horses with only a halter instead of a bridle and bit—but they are expert riders, of course. However Gassy was not a regular Wild West horse, so it was safe enough, as it happened.

"Now you make believe you're a steer and run," urged Dick to Sam, "and I'll lasso you."

"Don't pull me too tight," begged Sam, as he prepared to run across the field. Dick, swinging a loop of the junkman's clothesline around his head, as he had seen pictures of cowboys do, prepared to do the lasso act, urging Gassy to as fast a gait as the horse could keep up.

"I'll be careful," promised Dick.

Gassy was very stiff and old. He did not care much for this sort of fun, if the truth be told. He would much have preferred to be allowed to crop the sweet, green grass. But

"Whoopee! Wow! I'm a Wild West cowboy!"

horses are accustomed to doing as the driver, or rider on their back, directs them. So Gassy ambled off, being guided by Dick in pursuit of the running Sam.

"Make him go faster!" cried Janet.

"He's awful slow!" added Mary.

"Gid-dap!" called Dick, clapping his little heels against the ribs of Gassy. The ribs showed plainly. You could almost count them.

Thus urged, Gassy broke into a short trot, chugging Dick up and down on his back like butter in a churn.

"Now you're going!" yelled Dick. "Whoopee! Wow! I'm a Wild West cowboy! Gid-dap, Gassy!"

He yelled, while the girls laughed and Sam ran on ahead. It was not easy, without a bit and bridle, to guide Gassy after the running boy, but Dick did the best he could. At last he found himself close behind his chum, and, swinging the rope in another twirl of loops, he shot it from his hand trying to do it as he thought a cowboy would.

The coils fell far short of the running Sam.

"I can do as good as that!" taunted Janet.

"You just wait!" cried Dick. "It got tangled. I'll try again. Go on, Sam, run some more!"

"Aw, I'm tired!" Sam protested. "Let me ride now—it's my turn!"

"No, I got to lasso you first," declared Dick, as he pulled in the rope, meanwhile sitting on Gassy's back, the horse having come to a full stop.

"All right. You have one more chance and then it's my turn," insisted Sam.

"And then I want a ride," added Janet. "Don't you, Mary?"

"I'll ride if you let the horse walk," Mary said. She was not quite as wild as the Cherries.

"I'll lead him for you," offered Sam.

"Go on now, run!" ordered Dick, who had the rope coiled again. "I'm going to lasso you, Sam!"

"All right, but hurry up—I want my turn," was the answer.

"Go on, Gassy! Gid-dap!" commanded Dick, and once more, with a sort of patient, resigned air, and perhaps an inward creaking of his old joints, the junkman's horse started off.

Then Sam had an idea. As long as he ran too fast Dick could not fling a coil of rope about his head, and thus the game would be prolonged. Sam might not get his turn for quite a while.

So when Sam, by turning half-way around, saw Dick coming after him, whooping and swinging the clothesline lasso, Sam slowed up, and, as the coils of rope swung near him, Sam actually thrust his head through.

"I caught you! I lassoed you!" shouted Dick, pulling back with one hand on the lasso and with the other on the looped halter around Gassy's head.

"Yes, you caught me fair," admitted Sam, but he did not say he had purposely thrust his head into the noose. "And now it's my turn to lasso you," he added.

"All right," agreed Dick, rather sorry he had been so successful. It was fun to ride on Gassy's back, playing at being a cowboy. But he must be fair.

"Say, don't I get a turn?" cried Janet.

"In a minute—soon as Sam ropes me," answered her brother. "You girls can play being Indians 'till we get ready."

"Pooh! That's no fun!" exclaimed Janet. "I want a ride and so does Mary."

"All right—in a little while!" promised Dick.

Then Sam mounted to Gassy's bony back, and swung the lasso as Dick had done, chasing that little Wild Cherry lad who raced about, pretending to be a steer, a runaway horse or a mountain lion, as suited his fancy.

And, after a little while, either by good management or luck, Sam threw the coil about Dick's shoulders, and pulled so hard that Dick was yanked off his feet.

"Oh, look out! Don't do that!" cried Janet, fearing lest Dick be hurt.

"I didn't mean to, but Gassy stopped all of a sudden," explained Sam.

"That's all right—I'm not hurt," and Dick jumped up, laughing, though his fall had not been an easy one. "You caught me good, Sam," he added, "and now it's my turn to—"

"No, it's *our* turn!" insisted Janet, "and if we don't get some rides we're not going to play —so there!"

"Give 'em some turns," advised Sam, sliding off Gassy's back.

Janet next mounted, with the aid of an empty

box, and she rode about the field near the junkman's house. She even swung the lasso and yelled as Dick had done, but the boys would not let her try to lasso them, saying she might tangle the rope around their legs. And Mary was too timid for this part of the fun.

"All right, then I'll lasso a post!" decided Janet. And, what is more, she did it, too. She rode toward one of the clothes posts as fast as she could make Gassy gallop and, somewhat to her own surprise, as well as the astonishment of her playmates, she flung the loop straight and true around the post on her first cast.

"Now I'm just like a real cowgirl!" laughed Janet. "Come on, Mary," she added, "it's your turn to ride."

"Somebody's got to lead Gassy, then," Mary insisted. "I don't know how to steer a horse."

"I'll lead him," kindly offered Dick, and he gave Mary a good, long ride around the fields.

"Now I'll be a cowboy again," suggested Dick, as he and Sam helped Mary down off Gassy's back. "You must run real fast, Sam, so's it'll be hard to lasso you."

"All right, but don't trip me up," begged the other boy.

"I won't," Dick promised.

He was leading Gassy back toward the pile of boxes, which served as a mounting block for the riders, when Gassy, with a sudden motion of his head, pulled the end of the halter out of Dick's hand.

"Whoa Gassy!" called the boy.

But Gassy did not "whoa!" He swung away, with the intention of getting a mouthful of the juicy grass. And, just then, a bee, sailing through the air, happened to light on the animal's flank. Whether the bee did not like horses, or whether it was angry because of the collision, I do not know. But the bee stung the junkman's bony steed.

In an instant, with wild whinny of a cry, Gassy kicked up his heels and, a moment later, was running away across the fields faster than he had galloped in many a long day.

"Oh, there he goes!" cried Janet. "There he goes."

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE TRAIL

THERE was no doubt of it. Gassy was certainly going!

Off over the fields he ran, kicking up his heels and shaking his head, his tail and mane flying in the wind. It was more freedom than the old junk horse had had in many a year, and he was making the most of it.

Of course the sting of the bee started him off, but after he once began going he must have liked it so well that, very likely, he said to himself:

"I'm just going to run as much as I please, for once. And I don't have to drag after me a rattling, old junk wagon! Hurray!"

Mind you, I am not stating for certain that Gassy said this. But he might easily have thought it—might he not?

"Oh, look at him go!" gasped Mary.

"He sure is running away!" added Sam.

"And we've got to run after him!" declared Dick.

"What do you mean—run after him?" asked his sister. "I've had enough of playing Wild West. I'm going home! Come on, Mary, we'll have a little play-party for our dolls, and maybe Jane will give us some cookies to eat—*real* cookies," she added.

"But say," protested Dick. "We got to run after Gassy!"

"What for?" Janet wanted to know. "We're done playing with him; aren't we—anyhow Mary and I are, if you boys want to—"

"But we got to put him back in the stable," went on Dick. "We took him out and we got to put him back. Mr. Feldman won't care that we took his horse if we put him back—but we got to put him back!"

"That's right!" agreed Sam, who understood what Dick meant. "We got to get Gassy back."

"But how can you?" asked Janet. "He's running away!"

"Then we got to run after him!" decided

Dick. "We took Gassy and we got to bring him back."

"Same as like when your mother borrows something from next door," remarked Mary. "You got to bring it back. Is that what you mean?"

"Sure," murmured Sam. "Come on, Dick. We'll have to run fast to catch up to him—he's almost over to the road already."

A road, leading to the woods, ran at the foot of Feldman's lane, and it was toward this road that Gassy was heading, still kicking his heels up in the air, shaking his head from side to side and with his tail and mane fluttering in the wind.

Dick and Sam started off together, side by side, like two racers. Dick looked back to where his sister and Mary were standing.

"You girls better go back home," advised Dick. "Maybe we'll be a long time catching Gassy. And you'd better—now—you'd better tell mother what happened," he added, speaking as though he did not like to say what he said.

"Oh—tell mother!" gasped Janet. "You

mean about us taking the horse and how he ran away?"

"Sure we got to tell!" declared Dick, more firmly now. "Mr. Feldman may come home and think his horse is stolen and somebody's got to tell him if we don't get back in time. Mother or daddy will tell."

"Yes, but what will mother say when I tell her—she'll say it was our fault," murmured Janet.

"Well—it—now—it's got to be told!" sighed Dick, taking a long breath, as he sometimes did when he first got into the bath tub of water.

"Maybe we can get Gassy back before Mr. Feldman comes home," suggested Sam. "Come on, Dick, let's hurry before he gets out of sight."

"And I'll go tell mother," offered Janet. "You ought to come with me and help tell, Dick 'cause it was you let Gassy get away."

"Well, I can't go home and tell, and go after the horse, too!" declared Dick.

"No, I guess that's so," agreed Janet. "Well—all right—I'll tell. But I know what mother will say—and Grandma, too!"

"She'll call us wilder than ever," announced Dick grimly. But it could not be helped.

They certainly were Wild Cherries!

Jogging along at a dog-trot, Sam and Dick made their way down the lane in the direction taken by the runaway Gassy. Dick turned to see Mary and his sister heading back toward the village, and then the boy had another idea.

"We ought to go back and leave a note for Mr. Feldman," said Dick.

"Leave a note—what do you mean?" asked Sam.

"I mean about his horse. If he comes home now, and sees the stable open, he'll think somebody has stolen Gassy."

"We could shut the stable door," said Sam.

"Well, he'd know as soon as he opened it. But if we wrote on a piece of paper that we were playing Wild West with Gassy, and he ran away and we're running after him and going to bring him back—then maybe Mr. Feldman wouldn't be so mad at us."

"Maybe not," agreed Sam. "All right, let's do it."

"You write it," begged Dick, for Sam was a little older.

So Sam, with a stub of a pencil, wrote on a piece of scrap-paper he found blowing about the yard:

> "Mr. Feldman. We played Wild West with Gassy and he ran away but we are after him and we are going to bring him back. He ran like anything."

"Is that all?" asked Sam, when he had read the note to Dick.

"I guess so. But we got to sign it and put something else in—you know, like we do when we write letters in school. You have to say 'yours respectfully.' "

"How do you spell re-re-spect—" began Sam, pausing with the pencil in his mouth.

"Oh, just put 'yours,' and then a lot of scribbles so it will look like a word," advised Dick. "I don't know how you spell it."

So Sam put a lot of "scribbles" on the bottom of the note. Then he and Dick signed their names, fastened the bit of paper on the door of the junkman's house and once more started off on the trail of Gassy.

By this time the horse was out of sight, so

fast had he trotted after that bee-sting. But the boys knew the road down the lane and into the woods and thought they would soon come upon the animal peacefully cropping grass beside the highway.

However when they turned from the lane into the road, Gassy was not even there in sight. The boys looked up and the boys looked down, but they did not see the bony steed.

"Where do you s'pose he's gone?" asked Sam.

"I don't know," Dick answered, in a tired and discouraged voice. "We got to keep on looking, though."

"Same as when you're trying to catch the fellows when we're playing hide-and-go-seek," added Sam.

"That's it," agreed Dick.

They walked down the road a short distance, and then back the other way. But no Gassy did they see.

"S'posin' we couldn't ever find him?" suggested Sam, as they paused to rest. "S'posin' he was gone forever?"

"Whew!" whistled Dick. He didn't like to think of that.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CAMP FIRE

JANET and Mary walked slowly back over the fields, toward the village and their homes.

"What are you going to tell your mother?" Mary wanted to know.

"Why, I'll tell her just what happened," answered the other. "Mother will know what to do to get Gassy back."

"Do you s'pose he'll ever come back?" Mary next asked.

"Course he will," declared Janet. "If he doesn't, my father will go after him."

"Maybe the Gipsies will take him," suggested Mary.

"Who; take my father? I guess not!" and Janet bristled with pride in her father's ability to keep clear of the Gipsies.

"No, I mean Gassy," explained Mary. "The Gipsies might take Mr. Feldman's horse."

"Why would they take him, Mary?"

" 'Cause, Janet, Mr. Feldman's horse has run away and maybe the Gipsies might think he didn't belong to anybody and they'd take him. Gipsies take horses wherever they find them, my father says. They like horses a lot, Gipsies do."

"Yes, we saw a lot of horses at their camp—Dick and I did—the time we hid in the red wagon," admitted Janet. "But I don't guess they'd take Gassy. But maybe they would, so I'll tell mother."

It did not take Mrs. Cherry more than a moment to guess, after one look at the faces of the girls, that something had happened. And it did not need Janet's excited: "Oh, Mother!" to let it be known that it was something unusual.

"What has happened, my dears?" asked Mrs. Cherry. "And where are the boys?" she quickly added, for she had seen the four going off together some time before. "Are they—has anything—" She paused, anxiously waiting.

"Dick and Sam are all right, Mother," Janet replied. "They're after Gassy," and then she told the story.

"Dear me! This is too bad!" exclaimed

Mrs. Cherry with a troubled look on her face. "You never should have taken Mr. Feldman's horse to play Wild West with. But of course it's too late to tell you that, now. I must think of a way to get the animal back."

"I'll help get him back if I can," offered Mary, " 'cause I helped get him away."

"No, dear, you needn't bother yourself any more about it," said Mrs. Cherry. "Run home and tell your mother what has happened, and say that Mr. Cherry will go after the junkman's horse. Of course if your father wants to come he may. Ask him to telephone over here when he comes home."

"I will," promised Mary. "Good-bye, Janet," she went on. "I'm sorry it happened, and I'll come and help you hunt for Gassy if you want me to."

"I guess my father can find him," Janet answered, and then Mary ran across the lots to her house.

"I hope Dick and Sam don't stay away too late looking for that strayed horse," murmured Mrs. Cherry.

"What's that—more trouble?" asked

Grandma Cherry, who had heard some of the talk. "What have the Wild Cherries been doing now?"

"Oh, mischief, as usual," sighed the mother. "But don't cry, Janet," she added, as she saw tears in her daughter's eyes. "I suppose it's like the time Grandma's cameo pin was lost—it just can't be helped."

"We tried to get Gassy," sobbed Janet, "but he ran off so fast we couldn't. But maybe Dick and Sam will bring him back."

"I'm afraid not," said Mrs. Cherry, and so it proved. For the boys came straggling back to the house a little later, tired and worried.

"Gassy went away off in the woods, and we couldn't find him," reported Dick.

"Maybe he'll go back to his stable himself," said Sam.

"Mr. Cherry will soon be home and then he'll see about it," Mrs. Cherry remarked. "You go home and tell your folks, Sam. If we want your father to help we'll telephone over."

"All right," answered Sam. "I'm awful sorry," he added, as he hastened home, for it was getting near to supper time.

"Well! Well! What next?" murmured Mr. Cherry when he heard the news. "What will the Wild Cherries do next?"

"Don't make fun of them," begged his wife in a whisper. "They feel sad enough about it already."

"I'm not making fun of them," answered her husband. "It isn't anything to make fun over —no joke at all! But I wonder what they will do next?"

"It's hard to say," replied his wife, with a sigh.

"Well, I suppose I'd better go look for that horse, or we'll have Mr. Feldman here all excited," said Mr. Cherry. "I'll get Mr. Nestor and Mr. Ward and we'll see if we can find the animal before dark. Don't ever do anything like this again, Dick and Janet," he warned them.

"No, we won't!" they promised.

Having talked with his two neighbors over the telephone, Mr. Cherry arranged to have them come with him to search for the missing Gassy.

"Do you want me to come with you and show you where he went?" asked Dick.

"No, I guess you'd better stay home," his father answered. "Just tell me where you last saw the horse."

"He was running into the woods near the cranberry bog," explained Dick. "It wasn't far from the Gipsy camp."

"Um," murmured Mr. Cherry. "If the Gipsies catch that horse we may never see it again. However, I may as well get started."

By this time Mr. Ward and Mr. Nestor had arrived at the house. The two men were laughing and seemed to think it more of a joke than anything else, but to Dick and Janet it was very serious. They feared the Gipsies might keep Mr. Feldman's horse, and that their father would have to buy a new one. This, Dick knew, would cost money. He was thinking of offering his father all the money he had saved in his penny bank, toward the purchase of a new horse, but decided it was best to wait until next day.

"This reminds me of the time I lived out West," said Mr. Ward with a laugh as he shook hands with Mr. Cherry. "We used to hunt for lost horses out there."

"Did you find them?" inquired Mr. Nestor.

"Not always," was the answer. "They got too far away."

When the father of the Wild Cherries had left with his neighbors, Dick and Janet wandered about the house. They were too uneasy to settle down and do anything. They wanted neither to play nor read.

Grandmother and Mrs. Cherry sat in their chairs sewing, and waiting for the men to return.

"It isn't as if some children were lost, and they were hunting for them," said Mrs. Cherry, after a while. "It isn't as bad as that."

"No," agreed Grandma. "And yet I suppose the junkman is poor, and it will be a sad thing for him if he can't get his horse back."

This made Janet and Dick feel more uncomfortable than ever, as they thought of their part in causing Gassy to run away. At last Dick could stand it no longer.

Dusk was just falling, and Mrs. Nestor and Mrs. Ward came over to call on Mrs. Cherry, and also to hear more of the queer story. This was Dick's chance. Seeing his mother busy talking to her two neighbors, Dick called to his sister:

"Hey, Jan, come on!"

"Where?" she asked, for she saw that he had his cap and was edging toward the door.

"Come on out and I'll tell you," he answered in a low voice.

On the side porch, where he could not be heard by those in the house, Dick went on:

"We're going to find Gassy!"

"Where?" gasped Janet.

"At the Gipsy camp," said Dick. "That's where he is, I'm pretty sure."

"But if he's there, Daddy and Mr. Ward and Mr. Nelson will get him," objected Janet.

"Maybe they won't," said Dick. "Anyhow, if we got Gassy back it wouldn't be so bad for us. Come on!"

"Oh, all right," Janet agreed, after thinking it over for a moment or two. "I'll go. I do hope we can get Gassy back." She turned as if to go into the house again.

"What's the matter?" Dick wanted to know. "Aren't you coming?"

"Yes," his sister answered, "but I'm going in and get my jacket. It's sort of cold."

"You don't need a jacket," retorted Dick.

"Yes I do, so!"

"Well, get a horse blanket out of the barn and wrap that around you. That'll keep you warm. If you go back in the house mother may ask where you're going when you come out, and maybe she won't let us. Get the horse blanket; that'll keep you warm like the time we played Indian."

"All right," agreed Janet.

"I'll get it for you," offered her brother, and soon the two Wild Cherries were wandering off in the gathering dusk, toward the woods and the camp of the Gipsies in the cranberry bog.

Dick and Janet were not afraid to be out after dark. It was not the first time they had been on adventures after the sun had gone down. Night had no terrors for them, for, after all, there is nothing to be afraid of just because it is dark.

Dick pulled his cap well down on his head, and Janet wrapped the folds of the old horse blanket about her. It took some little time to arrange this properly, so there would be no trailing ends to tangle in her legs and trip her. But at last she was satisfied.

"Do I look like an Indian, or a Gipsy?" she asked Dick.

"A little," he replied, not bothering to turn his head to see. His eyes were looking forward—he wanted to catch a glimpse of the missing Gassy.

"S'posing we see daddy, or he sees us?" asked Janet, when they were some distance from the house.

"Well—well—we'll just tell him we came out to help him," said Dick, after a pause. "He won't care, I guess."

The children knew a short cut to the Gipsy camp, and this way they took—a path across the lots and through a clump of trees. It was while going through these trees that Dick suddenly paused—so suddenly that Janet bumped into him.

"Ugh!" she grunted, her breath being knocked out of her for the moment. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"I see a fire—a camp fire!" whispered Dick. "I guess we're at the Gipsy camp!"

He pointed to a flickering gleam through the trees. Janet saw it now—it was a camp fire,

and dark figures could be seen moving about it.

"Oh, Dick," she began in a low voice, and then she suddenly gave a wild cry of: "Oh, I'm caught! Somebody has caught me! Oh, Dick!"

CHAPTER XXIV

A NIGHT RIDE

DICK turned quickly and ran back to his sister, for he had gone on a little way ahead. Out of his pocket he pulled a small flash-light he had slipped in when the idea came to him of taking Janet off on a search after dark.

In the gleam of this flash-light the boy now saw that no one was near his sister, who stood close to a thick bush.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick. "Nobody has hold of you! There's nobody here but us. What you hollering about?"

"Somebody caught hold of the horse blanket and nearly pulled it off me!" exclaimed Janet. "I could feel 'em pull!"

Dick flashed his light again. Then he laughed.

"'Tisn't anything to laugh at!" declared Janet, for her feelings were hurt, if nothing else.

"You aren't caught!" and Dick laughed again. "It's just that some briars from the bush are tangled in your horse blanket. I'll pull it loose!" which he did with a quick motion.

"Oh," murmured Janet, as she felt the relief of the strain. "Well, it felt just 'zactly like somebody had reached out from the bushes and caught hold of me. And I yelled!"

"You shouldn't ought to have yelled like that," declared Dick, as he switched off his flash-light.

"Why not?" demanded his sister. "I guess you'd yell if somebody grabbed you! Why shouldn't I holler?"

"'Cause the Gipsies will hear us coming, and we want to surprise 'em!"

"What for, Dick?"

"So we can see if they have Gassy."

"Well, if they have him all we got to do is to go up and tell 'em Gassy is Mr. Feldman's horse and for them to give him to us and we'll take him home—take the horse home, I mean."

"Yes, but," explained Dick, "maybe they want to keep the horse for theirselves. I mean themselves," he corrected. "They might think

it was a stray horse and nobody owned it and that they could keep it if they found it in the woods. And if they heard us coming they might hide Gassy."

"That's so," agreed Janet.

"That's why I want to sneak up on 'em," went on Dick. "But if you're going to holler all the while—"

"I guess you'd holler, too, if you thought somebody was reaching out of the bushes and pulling you," declared Janet again.

"But nobody was!" insisted Dick.

"I *thought* there was, and it was just as bad as if there really was," his sister said. "But I guess nobody heard me."

The two Wild Cherries looked toward the gleaming blaze. It was still flickering and leaping up amid the trees, and the dark figures could be seen passing to and fro around the camp fire. They had not heard Janet's cries, it appeared, or, if they had, they paid no attention to them.

"We've got to go closer if we want to see if Gassy is there," decided Dick.

"All right," agreed Janet. She would go anywhere Dick did, by day or by night.

"But you don't want to make any more noise," the boy warned his sister.

"I won't," she promised, wrapping the dangling horse blanket more closely about her. "Oh, Dick," she murmured, "do you s'pose maybe—now—they have it?"

"Maybe now they have what?" Dick asked in a low voice.

"Grandmother's cameo pin. Maybe they found it afterward and if we asked them now they'd give it to us."

"I don't guess they have it," said Dick. "Anyhow we're not after cameo pins now—we're after Gassy."

"But if we could find Grandma's pin we'd take it; wouldn't we?" Janet wanted to know.

"Sure," replied Dick, "but we aren't going to find it."

"I wish we could," sighed Janet. She felt that she would never forget the sad look on her Grandmother's face when it was known that the pin was lost.

Nearer and nearer to the gleaming camp fire Dick and Janet made their way. They had often played Indians in the woods, and could go very silently along a path in the for-

est. They were now on a path leading through the clump of trees to the blaze.

Suddenly one of the dark figures moving about the flickering flames threw on more wood. There was a brilliant flare for a moment, and by its gleam Dick saw something that caused him hoarsely to whisper:

"Look, there's the horse! There's Gassy all right!"

Janet looked. There was no mistaking that bony frame—those ribs that could almost be counted in the firelight—it was Old Ironsides the junkman's horse—old Gassy.

"Oh, it is him," Janet murmured. And then, as the fire flared up brighter she added: "But look—those aren't Gipsies! Look, Dick! They're—tramps!"

It needed hardly a second look to let Dick see that Janet was right. Moving about the fire were a number of ragged men—men much more ragged than the Gipsies, who nearly all wore fairly good clothes. The Gipsies, however much they wandered about the country, were not like tramps. They took pride in looking neat.

"That's right—they *are* tramps," murmured Dick.

"And they've got Gassy," added his sister. "What are we going to do? Shall we go back and tell daddy? He thinks Gassy is at the Gipsy camp, and Gassy is here."

Dick did not answer for a moment. He stood there in the shadow of the trees and bushes, with Janet beside him, looking toward the camp fire of the tramps. The ragged men seemed to be cooking something in a kettle over the blaze. Now and then their voices could be heard—hoarse voices, sometimes laughing, sometimes bursting out into snatches of song.

"Shall we go back and tell daddy?" asked Janet.

"No," suddenly answered Dick in a low voice.

"What'll we do then?" his sister wanted to know.

"We'll get Gassy and take him back with us," decided Dick. "We can both ride on his back. You can sit on part of the horse blanket if you want to, for a saddle."

"How you going to get Gassy?" Janet wanted to know. That was much more im-

portant than whether or not she sat on the horse blanket.

"I'll sneak up there and get him when they aren't looking," her brother went on. "They've got him tied to a tree."

"What you s'pose they're going to do with him—with Mr. Feldman's horse?" asked Janet.

"I guess maybe they think they can sell him," suggested the boy.

"Listen," whispered Janet. "They're talking about him now."

Surely enough, as the children, who had crept nearer, listened, they heard one loud-voiced tramp ask:

"What'll we do with the nag?"

Janet and Dick had once read a funny little verse about an old horse that was called a "nag," so they knew what this word meant.

"Oh, I guess we can sell him," another tramp answered. "He didn't cost us anything. Carrots found him in the woods."

"Carrots," Dick and Janet decided, must be the nickname of a red-haired tramp, who, just then, threw more wood on the fire.

"Yes, we'll sell the old nag," laughed Car-

rots. "But now the stew is ready. Come on —let's eat."

Mingled with the smell of burning wood from the camp fire, there came to the noses of the children the odor of cooking—it had an appetizing flavor, too, even if the stew of the tramps was cooked in a rusty, old, iron kettle.

"I'll get the horse while they're eating," whispered Dick to his sister.

The eagerness of the tramps to eat the stew gave Dick the best chance he could have wished for to reach Gassy unseen. The horse was tied to a tree, not far from the camp fire, but in the shadows now, for the animal had moved around.

Telling Janet to keep very quiet, Dick walked on a little ahead of her until he had reached a point near the tethered horse. The tramps were now busy eating; talking and laughing so loudly that the little noise made by the children could not be heard.

Gassy was probably tired of his wanderings. He had run away—something unusual for him —he had kicked up his heels, he had shaken his head; his mane and tail had fluttered in the wind. That was enough excitement for any

horse. Now Gassy was ready to settle down. He had wandered through the woods and over the fields, going whither he wished, until, as has been said, one of the tramps found him.

The camp of the tramps was on the edge of the cranberry bog, while that of the Gipsies was farther in, and along a different path.

Carefully Dick reached up and loosened the halter rope. It was not the first time he had thus freed Gassy, for sometimes Mr. Feldman let the two Wild Cherries help him hitch the horse to the junk wagon and ride with him.

Silently Dick began to lead the animal out to a place where he and Janet could get on his back. The horse did not make any effort to be quiet, of course. Gassy stepped on sticks and twigs that broke and cracked beneath his feet. But the tramps paid no heed to this. They had been hearing the tethered animal move about since they had caught him, and they supposed he was merely doing this now—a sort of restless movement.

"Have you got him?" whispered Janet to her brother as he came out of the bushes around the camp fire.

"Yes," he answered, in a low voice. "And

here's a stump we can get on so we can reach his back. Spread the blanket on for a saddle if you want to."

"No, I'm going to keep the blanket on me, 'cause I'm cold," Janet said.

"All right," agreed her brother.

A few minutes later the two children were on the back of old Gassy, and Dick was guiding the animal, as best he could, out of the clump of trees by means of the halter. The Wild Cherries feared lest the tramps see them or hear them, but nothing like this happened.

"Now we'll ride home and they can take the horse back to Mr. Feldman," said Dick, when they had started off on their night ride.

"Won't they be s'prised to see us!" exclaimed Janet, holding on by putting her arms about her brother's waist, while the old horse blanket was draped around her. "Won't they be s'prised, though?"

"I guess they will," said Dick, laughing. "Go on, Gassy!" he called more loudly now, for they were some little distance from the camp fire. "Gid-dap."

"He gid-daps good; doesn't he?" asked

Janet, proud of her brother's skill in making Gassy trot.

"Yes, I guess he knows he's going home," said her brother.

Dick knew the way home—it was not the first time he had been to this part of the cranberry bog after dark. Gassy, too, seemed able to pick his path without wandering into the underbrush.

For a time the children rode along in silence. The flicker of the fire had died away, and they could no longer hear the murmuring voices and laughter of the tramps.

"I guess they'll be surprised, too, when they look for Gassy and don't find him!" chuckled Dick, as he clapped his heels, like spurs, to the bony sides of the junkman's horse.

"I guess so," agreed Janet. "It's a good thing you got him back, Dick."

"Yes," her brother murmured.

And then, from somewhere ahead of them, the children heard a noise. They saw a flickering light and the murmur of voices came to them.

"Oh, maybe it's the tramps after us!" gasped Janet.

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE HORSE BLANKET

TOWARD the cranberry bog went the three men—Mr. Cherry, Mr. Nestor and Mr. Ward.

"It's too bad to bring you neighbors out on this wild-goose chase," apologized Mr. Cherry, as they tramped on in the gathering darkness.

"Oh, we don't mind!" chuckled Mr. Ward.

"I rather like it," added Mr. Nestor. "It reminds me of the time when I was a boy and used to get into mischief myself."

"Well, my Wild Cherries seem to get into mischief more often and more easily than any children I ever saw," remarked the father of Dick and Janet.

"Well, I guess my boy helped in this trick," said Mr. Ward.

"And my Mary, too," went on Mr. Nestor. "They're all alike when it comes to wanting fun—children are."

"I only hope we get back Feldman's horse,"

spoke Mr. Cherry. "If it's lost, or if some one has taken it away, I suppose I'll have to pay for it. Not that it is worth such a lot of money, though."

"If there's a horse to be paid for, we'll all pay our share," declared Mr. Nestor.

"That's right—we'll all chip in as we fellows did when one of us broke a window playing baseball," laughed Mr. Ward. "But maybe we'll get the old horse back. If he's anywhere he's at the Gipsy camp."

"That's what I think," said Mr. Cherry. "The children seemed sure that he was headed toward there."

There was an excited gathering of the dark-skinned men and women—children, too—about the three searchers when, a little later, they reached the Gipsy camp in the cranberry bog.

"Ah, here is father of two children who haf ride with me," murmured Kobah, who, it appeared, had come back to join his friends, after having gone away for a time.

"Your children are not here—they did not come here," said Madame Deborah, the fortune-teller, coming from her tent to stand in the light of the Gipsy camp fire.

"No, we didn't come about the children this time, nor about a missing cameo pin," said Mr. Cherry with a smile. "Dick and Janet are safe at home (he really thought they were) and I fear the cameo of my mother is gone for ever. But this time we come about a horse."

"A horse?" cried Kobah. "You want buy a horse? I haf some good ones I sell you—vera good—vera cheap. You should come with me, gentlemans—"

"No! No! We aren't buying horses," answered Mr. Cherry. "We're looking for a runaway horse belonging to a junkman. My children, and another boy and girl, played Wild West with it."

Then he explained about the running away of Gassy.

"But he isn't here," said Madame Deborah. "We have no horses here but our own. Is it not true?" she asked, appealing to the circle of Gipsy men crowding around her.

"It is true," they murmured.

A quick look about the camp proved the truth of this. Gassy had not come to the Gipsies, and Mr. Cherry and his two friends thought the wandering tribe was speaking the truth

when nearly all the members said they had seen nothing of the runaway animal.

"I saw an old bony horse in the woods," said Tamma, the Gipsy boy.

"You did?" cried Mr. Cherry. "Which way was he going?"

"Over there," and Tamma pointed toward the other edge of the cranberry bog.

"That may have been Gassy," said Mr. Ward. "I don't believe there is much use searching any further to-night," he added.

"Nor I," added Mr. Nestor. "If you people find that horse, please bring him to Mr. Cherry," he requested.

"We shall do," spoke Madame Deborah.

"If she's a real fortune-teller she ought to be able to find that lost horse for us," said Mr. Nestor in a low voice to his two friends, as they left the Gipsy camp.

"She knows about as much of where Gassy is as I do," laughed Mr. Cherry. "But they may find the animal in the morning. It's too dark, as you say, to look any more now. Feldman knows me and I guess he won't make much of a fuss. Dick says he and Sam left a note on his door."

"Yes," agreed Sam's father. "It sounds like a story out of a book," he chuckled.

So Mr. Cherry and the others left the Gipsy camp, to return home, and you can imagine how surprised Mr. Cherry was when his wife met him at the door, greatly excited, and cried out:

"The children are gone!"

"Where?"

"I don't know. Didn't they follow you?"

"No," answered Mr. Cherry. "We went on to the Gipsy camp and have just come from there. We didn't see Dick or Janet!"

"Oh, dear!" sighed his wife, almost ready to cry. "Where can they have gone?"

"We'll have to get right after them!" her husband exclaimed as he heard the story of the missing children. "I guess they, too, went to look for the horse."

"We'll help you find them," offered Mr. Ward and Mr. Nestor, whose wives had gone back home after a brief visit at the Cherry house.

Once again, off into the darkness, tramped the three men. By this time Dick and Janet, riding Gassy, were on their way home through

the woods. They had halted on hearing voices and seeing a flickering light in the clump of trees.

"Do you s'pose it's the tramps coming to take Gassy away from us?" whispered Janet, keeping a firm hold around her brother's waist.

"No," he answered. "The tramp camp is back of us, and the light is in front of us."

"Oh," began Janet, "maybe it's—"

But at that instant a voice called through the woods:

"Hello, Janet! Hello, Dick! Where are you?"

"Oh, it's *daddy!*" cried Janet in joyful tones.

"He's looking for us," added Dick. "Here we are!" he called more loudly. "And we've got Gassy!"

A few moments later the three men—for it was their voices and flashing lantern the children had heard and seen, were greeting Dick and Janet.

"What in the world are you trying to do?" asked their father, as he saw the two up on Gassy's back, Janet wrapped in the old horse blanket.

"We just went out to see if we could find Gassy, and we did," explained Dick. "The tramps had him."

"Yes, we heard there was a camp of tramps in these woods, soon after we started out to find you," said Mr. Cherry. "That's the reason we headed for this place after we came back from the Gipsies. Well, I guess this ends the adventures of the night."

But it did not. The best was yet to come.

"You two might as well stay up there, on the horse," said Mr. Cherry, when explanations had been made. "We'll lead him to our house and there you can get off. Then we'll send Gassy back to his owner. And don't ever take him again."

"We won't," promised Dick and Janet.

Mrs. Cherry came running out to meet them when she heard voices and footsteps approaching.

"Oh, Dick and Janet! How could you give us so much trouble?" she asked, somewhat sadly. "You shouldn't have gone out alone after dark."

"We wanted to help find Gassy, and we did,"

said Dick proudly, as he slid off the ridge pole of Gassy's back. The horse was so bony that his back looked like the peak of a barn roof.

"And he isn't hurt a bit," added Janet, as she was helped off the animal, her horse blanket shawl still wrapped around her.

As she slid to the ground the little girl gave a cry of pain, and put her hand to her left leg.

"What's the matter? Are you hurt?" asked her mother quickly.

"Something sharp stuck me!" explained Janet.

"It must be one of the thorns from the briar bush," said Dick. "She thought somebody had hold of her," he added with a laugh.

"It felt so," explained Janet. "But this is a bigger prick. Oh, it's sticking me again!" she cried. "Ouch!"

She put her hand down in the blanket that was tangled about her legs. She fumbled for a moment and then, with a cry of delight and surprise, she brought out—Grandma Cherry's missing cameo pin!

"Look! Look!" cried Janet. "I've found it! I've found Grandma's pin!"

It needed but a glance to make certain of this. In the light of the lantern carried by Mr. Cherry, the golden pin gleamed brightly.

"Where was it?" demanded Dick. "Where'd you find it?"

"In the horse blanket!" cried Janet, as she passed the jewel to her mother. "I 'member, now. I was playing dress-up in the horse blanket, and I fastened the pin on. Then I took the blanket off and I must have forgotten about the pin."

"And it's been on this old blanket ever since!" said Mother Cherry. "Just fancy that!"

"Most remarkable!" murmured Grandma Cherry, as she came out to see what had caused all the excitement. "Oh, I am so glad to get my cameo back!" she added. "Now I am very happy!"

"You aren't any happier than I am!" laughed Janet.

"It's a good thing Gassy ran away, or maybe we'd never have found Grandma's pin," declared Dick.

"Yes, I suppose that's right," said Mr. Cherry. "For the old blanket might have hung there for years and never have been moved, or

taken out again. You are very lucky, Janet."

"Yes, I guess I am," and she laughed happily.

Grandma pinned her precious pin at her throat, and smiled gladly.

"We'll take Gassy back to Mr. Feldman," offered Mr. Nestor and Mr. Ward. "Then you folks can stay home and celebrate the find."

"Thank you," said Mr. Cherry.

"It really is like a story in a book; isn't it?" murmured Janet as she and Dick went in the house. "Oh, I'm so glad Grandma has her pin back!"

The Gipsies were glad, too, when they heard the news next day, for they were honest folk, and did not like to have resting on them the suspicion that one of them might know something about the missing cameo.

As a special favor Dick and Janet were allowed to go to the Gipsy camp with their father when he told about the cameo pin having been found.

"That is good news," said Madame Deborah, and she gave the children some more spangles like those they had picked up in the woods at the place where Tamma, as a joke, had hidden their lunch basket. Tamma winked and

blinked his black eyes at the Wild Cherries; and, some time later, he and Dick became good friends. Tamma taught Dick many secrets of the woods, and showed him how to whistle in imitation of the wild birds.

Mr. Feldman only laughed when he returned, two days later and learned that his horse had been taken away, had been lost and had been found again.

"It's all right," the junkman said, smiling. "What I care so long as I have him back again, and he isn't damaged? It's all right! I give you Wild Cherries a ride when you like it."

"Thank you," murmured Janet and Dick.

And so their adventures, for a time, at least, came to an end. But there were others in store for them. Janet and Dick could not keep quiet very long, and you may be sure they lost little time in finding something else to do.

What it was I shall tell you about in the next book of this series, which will be called: "Two Wild Cherries in the Country; or How Dick and Janet Saved the Mill." I hope you will like to read that story.

THE END

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